



THE INDEPENDENT

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Britain is the drug capital of Europe

The British have developed a predilection for illegal drugs which is unrivalled throughout Europe. Ian Burrell finds that an EU report out tomorrow will put pressure on Britain's policy-makers to re-think their whole approach to drug education.

The British tourist authorities will happily concede that this country introduced the world to the delights of whisky and gin: they may not be quite so ready to promote the fact that we also lead the way in our appreciation of other more illicit substances such as cannabis, amphetamines, LSD and ecstasy.

Tomorrow the European Union will publish a report which will show just how deeply ingrained drug culture has become in British society. It shows that we use considerably more illegal drugs than any other member state.

Cannabis, in particular, impacts more on the national mood than the Government may hitherto have realised. One in eight Britons aged under 40 admitted to having used the drug in the last year, more than any other country.

Young British adults also use more amphetamines, ecstasy and LSD than citizens of the other EU countries.

More than half of the EU seizures of these so-called "dance drugs" were made in Britain, according to the survey carried out for the EU by the Lisbon-based European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction.

Professor Martin Plant, head of the Alcohol and Health Research Group in Edinburgh, admitted last night: "The UK is the drug capital of Europe."

The rave culture, which originated in Britain a decade ago, has been exported to all corners of the EU, helping to make drug-taking acceptable among a wide cross-section of young people.

Georges Estievenart, who led the EU research team, said that dance drugs are on the increase across Europe and the

stereotypical image of drug users as drop-outs on the margins of society was no longer relevant. "These drugs are used more and more by young fairly well-to-do people. They're often students or they have jobs, but at the weekends they like to take part in rave parties and techno concerts which involve the use of these synthetic drugs."

The EU report found that 13 per cent of Britons admitted using cannabis in the last year, putting it ahead of Spain (11.6 per cent), France (8.9 per cent), Germany (8.8 per cent), and Denmark (7 per cent). Some 29 per cent of Britons under 40 had tried cannabis, a proportion only exceeded in Denmark, where 43 per cent have experimented.

The use of "dance drugs" in Britain was unparalleled. Some 11 per cent of under-40s have used amphetamines, 4 per cent in the last year, and 4 per cent have tried ecstasy, half of them in the last 12 months. Only Spain comes close: 3.8 per cent have tried amphetamines, while 3.1 per cent have used ecstasy.

Seizure figures underline the widespread availability of dance drugs. In 1995 Britain accounted for 69 per cent of all seizures of ecstasy across the EU, 59 per cent of amphetamine seizures and 48 per cent of LSD. Britain also seized 27 per cent of the EU's heroin haul.

Only in use of the so-called "champagne drug" cocaine does Britain lag behind some of its European neighbours, with 3% admitting that they had tried it, compared with 5.7% of Spaniards and 3.7% of Germans. Heroin use is low across the EU, says the report.

The drug-using habits of British schoolchildren give even more cause for concern. The EU found that 12% of British 15 and 16-year olds had tried LSD, compared with 4.5% in Spain, the next closest; 37 per cent of British teenagers have tried cannabis.

These findings will be compounded by a survey of teenage drug abuse in 26 countries to be issued by Professor Plant's department on Thursday. He said the time had come for a thorough re-examination of Britain's drugs policy.



Pro patria: Paul Pounder, a gay former naval light engineer, salutes at the Cenotaph Photograph: Andrew Buurman

Pink memorial for gays who died in battle

More than 200 people attended a wreath laying ceremony at the Cenotaph in Whitehall yesterday to commemorate homosexuals who died in armed service.

The hour-long event, a week ahead of the official Remembrance Sunday commemoration, was immediately condemned as "distasteful" by the Royal British Legion. After pink carnations were laid at the memorial, Peter Tatchell, spokesman for

the gay rights group Outrage, said: "The British Legion should be joining our ceremony not criticising it." But the Legion said the service was "bound to offend many former soldiers".

Service men who happened to chance upon the ceremony said they were not offended. Albert Judge, an 85-year-old Chelsea pensioner, saluted the assembled gays and lesbians as he walked down

Whitehall. "If it's genuinely for those sort of people who fought in the Great Wars I have got nothing against it," said Mr Judge, who served five years in the Royal Navy and 31 years with the Royal Signals. George Savage, 70, of Covent Garden, who was selling poppies, said: "If they fought and they served I am not against it, but I am against all this political stuff. I don't have a problem with gays."

INSIDE TODAY

12/STYLE



Velvet, the smooth operator

THE EYE



Lee Hurst: Not so hard after all

TODAY'S NEWS

Woodward dilemma

Louise Woodward - the British au pair found guilty of murdering a child in her care - may face the agonising choice of either admitting a manslaughter charge in order to reduce her sentence, or continuing to maintain her complete innocence and serving 15 to 20 years in jail. Page 3

Computer thieves home in

Burglars have worked out a novel way of finding out whether you've got a computer they want to steal, and when you won't be at home to guard it: they just ring you up and ask you. Page 7

Rationing BMWs for Brits

BMW has decided that its cars are becoming too popular in Britain; the German makers think too many people are buying them, so they are going to restrict the number they supply here. Page 7

French truck dispute

This year's French trucker dispute looks like being even worse than the last. British drivers have been struggling to get back before their Gallic counterparts man the barricades. Page 9

SEEN & HEARD

It has always been a dog eat dog world but now, it seems, birds are getting in on the act. The great skuas of the Shetland Islands, known as bonxies, used to dine mainly off fish. But British Birds magazine reports that, rather than stealing fish from other birds, they are attacking and eating the birds instead. So voracious are the skuas, the magazine fears they could be causing a decline in kittiwake numbers.

Divided Tories lurch towards open civil war

Further resignations from William Hague's frontbench team were threatened yesterday, if the party decides to vote against the Amsterdam Treaty next week. Our Political Editor reports on the Tories' running civil war.

Michael Heseltine, the former deputy prime minister, said yesterday that nothing would persuade him to leave the Conservative Party. He and his colleagues would now make a stand and fight every inch of ground against the Euro-sceptic "rump" that had survived the election landslide.

"You're always going to lose if you let the Euro-sceptics bacon-slice you," he told BBC Breakfast with Frost, in a reference to what had happened under the last Conservative Government. "That process is now at an end."

Drawing a parallel with Labour's civil war over unilateral nuclear disarmament, Europe, and public ownership in the early 1980s, Mr Heseltine said: "Nothing would persuade me to leave the Conservative Party."

Some Labour moderates, such as Denis Healey and Roy Hattersley, had stood and fought the hard Left, while others, such as Shirley Williams, Roy Jenkins and David Owen, had left Labour to form the Social Democratic Party.

In the end, Mr Heseltine said, Labour had been won back "to the voice of reason of the centre-left",

and he added: "It's very possible that David Owen would have led the Labour Party if he'd stayed and fought."

With some right-wingers calling for Tory dissidents to be "dumped" for backing a European single currency, the battle shows every sign of deepening bitterness.

David Curry, the agriculture spokesman who resigned from the shadow cabinet on Saturday, told BBC Radio 5 Live he could not have won the fight against the "hard line" taken against the single currency in the shadow cabinet. "I think that was a declaration of war," he said. "It was bound to be divisive."

Mr Curry indicated he would have been happier with the line taken

ANTHONY BEVINS

in the Tories' recent party political broadcast and the "for the foreseeable future" line taken at party conference.

But he complained: "They had to drive towards some biblical statement on this which was bound to be divisive and I cannot say I subscribe to it because I don't."

Mr Curry added: "It is much easier for me to get out and state my principles, then everybody knows where they are."

But Ian Taylor, who also resigned from the front bench last week, warned the shadow cabinet that if it stepped up its Euro-

sceptic line, others could follow.

Giving an example of the kind of provocation that might trigger further resignations, Mr Taylor told BBC radio's *World this Weekend*. "I hope we do not take a bull-headed view of the Amsterdam Treaty. These are the sort of issues that could trigger further problems within the Conservative Party."

The second reading of the Bill to enact the treaty is scheduled for next week, but the shadow cabinet has to decide on Wednesday whether to demand that all its MPs vote against it, as signalled by Michael Howard, the shadow Foreign Secretary, last week.

Peter Lilley, the shadow Chancellor, summed up Conservative policy towards the single currency on GMTV's *Sunday* programme as, "Let them suck it, and we'll see."

The backbencher Alan Clark rounded on the likes of Mr Heseltine and the former Chancellor Kenneth Clarke. He said: "They should shut up... If they won't shut up then they should leave the Conservative Party."

But the former Home Office minister Ann Widdecombe, now a Tory backbencher, attacked the leadership, saying it had been provocative to depart from the previous policy which held the party together - ruling out participation "for the foreseeable future".

As ominous for the Tory leadership, Edward Macmillan-Scott, leader of the Conservative Members of the European Parliament, told BBC television's *On the Record* that he and his colleagues were not bound by Mr Hague's policy. The European parliamentary elections take place in 1999.

ALFRED DUNHILL LONDON

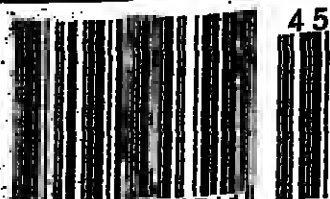


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WEATHER The Eye, page 10
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COLUMN ONE

Going bald, girls? Don't worry, it's distinguished

Look carefully next time you venture into the City. According to a Sunday newspaper yesterday you will see "thousands of young women" all apparently going bald. The reason? Their high-flying careers.

A study carried out by Dr Hugh Rushton, consultant trichologist from the School of Pharmacy at the University of Portsmouth interviewed 800 women, of whom about 30 per cent said they were suffering hair loss. The reason for this was said to be women adopting more aggressive and competitive working styles which medical "experts" say results in an increased sensitivity to testosterone, the male hormone which is already present, albeit in much lower levels in women.

High levels of testosterone have been linked in the past to hair loss. The number of women in professional jobs has risen by 20 per cent over the past 15 years. QED.

Look at 38-year-old Tracey Webb. She puts down her hair loss (she used to have long blonde hair, within two years she had to wear a wig) to "the stress of a demanding job in publishing and moving house three times in a year".



The implications, another trichologist warns, "can be serious" with three-quarters of women who suffered hair loss feeling less attractive. So the message appears to be clear: Don't go to work, girls; not only will you suffer stress, but, guess what, the boys won't fancy you any more. If this is true that working women are going to be suffering more hair loss because of aggressive, traditionally male, working practices, then let's hope we can at least benefit from a few other masculine traits.

Let's have more cosy female-only clubs so that we can drink after hours and network. In fact, let's go out and get drunk with people we work with and not worry about the way we'll be perceived in the office afterwards. And be able to tell our partners: "Was very 'portant had to shay out... Wash good for hussness. Would've bin awfoul if 'adn't bin air." Then fall over, burp, and fall asleep on the couch. Girls, let's wear the same disgusting suits to work every day; and let's learn to lean over someone else's computer terminal and say: "Well it's obvious, isn't it? Press that button there and it'll work." And then, when it doesn't, let's be able to say: "Well I don't know what on earth you can have been doing to it. You've completely messed up the system."

Expect three Michelin stars if you manage to open a tin of baked beans for the family tea. (Usually ignore the fact that for the past 10 years your loving partner has rustled up a three-course meal out of a bit of salad, some sickly baked plastic and a squeeze bottle.) In fact, sisters, let's run out of the house as soon as we hear a baby crying, turn green at the thought of giving birth, and look rather hopeless and confused if asked to distinguish between beige and taupe.

It can only be for the best. Because if we are going to watch our hair recede we can finally use the argument they've been using for decades - "it's not unattractive, it's distinguished". Let's all learn to pursue young whippersnappers half our age and have no shame. Let's spend all our time on golf courses instead of the office. Midlife crisis? I can hardly wait!

— Glenda Cooper, Social Affairs Correspondent

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PEOPLE



Pavarotti hits top C for a 10-year-old boy

Luciano Pavarotti has given a personal singing lesson to a 10-year-old boy with cerebral palsy whose health was dramatically improved after he started watching videos of the tenor in order to learn his breathing technique.

Allan Morton (above, with Pavarotti) from Kincardine-on-Forth, Fife, was born with cerebral palsy and hydrocephalus, and as a baby was slow to react to his surroundings. But when he was two he suddenly became "animated" when he saw Pavarotti on the television, and by the age of six had worn out countless videos of the singer. When doctors suggested that Allan take singing lessons to improve his breathing, he focussed on Pavarotti's work and can now sing arias in both Italian and English.

For his 10th birthday, Pavarotti invited Allan to one of his concerts in Manchester as a special treat and asked him backstage afterwards. Allan sang in Italian for the tenor, who then showed him how to hit a difficult top C. "I will show you how to sing that note. Before you go for it, pause, take a breath and then hit it," Pavarotti told him.

The maestro then applauded, gave Allan a hug and presented him with a signed autobiography before saying: "You sing like an angel."

Allan said afterwards that it was a dream come true to be able to sing in front of Pavarotti. "To sing for the maestro is the most wonderful moment of my life," he said. "Ever since I can remember his voice has inspired me. I can sing all his arias in both English and Italian, but there cannot be many people who get a singing lesson from the great man."

Geoff O'Connell, marketing director of the house-building company Bellway, which sponsored the concert, said: "As soon as Pavarotti heard about this most moving story he insisted on meeting Allan - and that he sang for him."

Last May, Pavarotti sang at the Royal Opera House before it closed for redevelopment. It was his only solo performance in London of the season and his first recital at the Royal Opera House in eight years. Pavarotti arrived in London with his girlfriend 27-year-old Nicoletta Mantovani. She was the singer's secretary, but moved into his Italian home two years ago when Pavarotti left his wife of 36 years.

She immediately put him on a strict diet to reduce his legendary bulk by several stones, and has been credited with huge influence over him, despite being younger than his three daughters.

— Kate Watson-Smyth

Hillary's optimistic words for peace in Ulster



Hillary Clinton, the American First Lady, spoke of her hopes for the Northern Ireland peace process yesterday in a speech at the US Embassy in London.

Mrs Clinton, who has spent part of the weekend with Tony and Cherie Blair, said she had noticed a sense of hopefulness during her trip to Dublin and Belfast.

"Although the euphoria of the President's [Clinton] trip nearly two years ago is not present, there certainly is a hopefulness and perhaps a more pragmatic sense of what it will take to bring the parties together," she told around 100 guests, including Virgin chief

Richard Branson, and the record-breaking Thrust SST team leader Richard Noble and his wife, at the embassy.

It was extraordinary that both parties were sitting down and speaking to one another, she added. "I congratulate the Prime Minister and this Government for all that they have done to further this event. As I have said in Dublin and Belfast, the President will stand with those who take risks for peace."

She said a date, soon to be released, had been set for Mr Blair to visit America and added she was very much looking forward to his trip.

Ban cruelty, says O'Sullivan

Sir Peter O'Sullivan, the racing commentator, will lead a protest against live animal exports today when he delivers a petition calling for a ban on live exports to Elliot Morley, the animal welfare minister. About 800,000 signatures have been collected by Compassion in World Farming, the animal rights campaigners.

Sir Peter, 79, said: "This inhumane trade in living creatures should be banned forthwith."

To coincide with the petition, the group is releasing video footage of animals being handled roughly in foreign abattoirs, and evidence that EU rules on resting and watering animals in transit are being flouted.

UPDATE

POLICE

A force for independent discipline

Many police officers would be happy to have complaints against them investigated by an independent body, according to a new survey, which found that exactly one-third of officers actually want an independent organisation to replace the current system.

At the moment, a network of Police Complaints Authorities investigates complaints by members of the public against officers.

A further 20 per cent of officers would not mind whether a new independent body was set up to replace the PCAs or whether the police themselves continued to investigate complaints. However, nearly 45 per cent, the largest single group of officers, would prefer such disciplinary procedures to be kept in-house. Nevertheless, the findings of the survey carried out for the Police Federation, which represents rank and file officers, are likely to strengthen the staff association's call for complaints against its members to be dealt with by an independent body.

The poll, based on the opinions of 9,000 serving officers, also found that nearly 85 per cent thought the public would have greater confidence in an independent complaints body, compared with just 7 per cent for the PCAs.

HEALTH

Young teeth suffer lack of fluoride



Children in parts of the UK where fluoride is not added to water supplies have up to seven times more tooth decay than those living elsewhere, a report said today.

Particular black spots were identified in the north-west, north, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and inner London. Five-year-olds with the worst teeth were most likely to live in the poorest regions of areas which did not receive fluoridated water. It was claimed. One in three of these children had undergone tooth extraction under general anaesthetic by the age of five. The figures were published by the National Alliance Against Dental Health Inequalities, representing 31 medical, dental and voluntary organisations. Fluoridated parts of the West Midlands, including some with high levels of social deprivation, had the best tooth decay record for children.

BUSINESS

London voted EU's capital city

European Union company executives have voted London Europe's best city for business for the eighth year running, it was revealed today.

The European Cities Monitor 1997 survey, published by Healey & Baker, international property consultants, showed that the UK capital won the accolade by a considerable margin in the eighth annual survey of senior executives from more than 500 leading European companies. Paris was in overall second place and Frankfurt was third. London's premier position as Europe's business capital is stronger than ever and it came top in six key criteria for determining where companies locate: easy access to markets; external transport links; quality of telecommunications; languages spoken; office space availability; and best internal transport.

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.29	Italy (lira)	2,751
Austria (schillings)	19.62	Japan (yen)	197.87
Belgium (francs)	57.65	Malta (lira)	0.62
Canada (\$)	2.38	Netherlands (guilders)	3.14
Cyprus (pounds)	0.82	Norway (kroner)	11.41
Denmark (kroner)	10.68	Portugal (escudos)	283.75
France (francs)	9.37	Spain (pesetas)	235.35
Germany (marks)	2.80	Sweden (kroner)	12.19
Greece (drachme)	443.52	Switzerland (francs)	2.28
Hong Kong (\$)	12.47	Turkey (lira)	292,850
Ireland (punts)	1.07	USA (\$)	1.62

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

HEALTHY
life

Im talking about me...
me and my musli yoghurt

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ZITS



Wood

The eyes of America are on Miller Zee... tomorrow... by Louise Miller... defense... verdict... in her... choice... Louise... have the... decision

Local pa... expulsion

A more... Conserv... it being... after the... of two... women... candidates... Political... on the... William... chance... muscles

Surrogate

The biolog... surrogate... newborn... a legal... of the... refused... Kate... on the... battle

Cam... father... John... Jacob... St. Colum... other... Karen... birth... an eight... heart... and his... But... equator

3/LEADING STORIES

THE INDEPENDENT
MONDAY
3 NOVEMBER 1997

Woodward faces the hardest choice of all

The eyes of Britain and America are on Judge Hiller Zobel who tomorrow will be asked by Louise Woodward's defence team to mitigate the murder verdict given by the jury in her trial last week. He faces a complicated choice but, as David Osborne explains, it is Louise herself who may have the hardest decision.

Louise Woodward says she is innocent. If that is so, then she may shortly face a dilemma unfathomable in its wickedness. Should the judge, in her murder trial, Hiller Zobel, decide after hearings tomorrow to lessen the verdict given by the jury last week from Murder Two to manslaughter, she will need to profess her guilt to the court.

Meanwhile, as Ms Woodward waited in her cell at the Framingham maximum security prison outside Boston yesterday, another crucial element was uncovered by *The Independent*: under seal of the court, there exists, according to police sources, a videotape showing Deborah Eappen, the mother of the victim, Matthew, coaxing his elder brother Brendan - vainly - to say that Ms Woodward committed the murder.

It is certain that when the defence team goes before the judge tomorrow it will exercise its right to implore the judge to consider three options, aside from upholding the verdict: to throw out the verdict and declare an acquittal; to order a retrial from scratch; or, indeed, to reduce the charge to manslaughter. Written motions will be submitted by the defence to the court this afternoon.

Many experts believe that if Judge Zobel chooses any of these three, it will be the last. But there is no certainty that Ms Woodward would co-operate. Her agony, if indeed she is in-

nocent, will be this: does she agree to plead guilty to manslaughter of a small child and ensure that she is home soon, probably before the millennium? Or does she maintain the purity of her innocence and consign herself to perhaps 15 or 21 years of incarceration?

All that we know of Ms Woodward so far suggests that she may resist the manslaughter compromise, even though it would leave Judge Zobel to decide on a sentence that could end being three to five years imprisonment or less. Whether through pride, stubbornness or some higher faith in the powers of justice, Ms Woodward has shown no willingness to compromise the purity of her declared innocence.

Indeed almost the last words we heard from her were at the moment of sentencing last Friday when she briefly rose to say: "I would like to maintain my innocence". And when it was asked what charges it would like the jury to consider before deliberations began last Tuesday, the defence opted for murder in the first- or second-degrees, or nothing at all, that is acquittal. That gamble, of course, backfired.

One juror was quoted in one British newspaper yesterday saying that the jury regretted not having manslaughter as an option it could consider. She said later, however, that she had been misquoted.

While the chances of the judge simply declaring an acquittal are considered infinitesimal, it is not beyond imagination that he could take the middle option: calling a retrial. In that circumstance, the first step one would expect would be a plea bargain negotiation between the two sides which would involve asking Ms Woodward to take exactly the same decision: agreeing to plead guilty to manslaughter.

Questions then arise about what tactics the defence would adopt if such negotiations failed and a new trial did become necessary. Would it open those doors it so conspicuously, and

controversially, left closed in the first trial? Would it offer an explanation, an alternative scenario - of how Matthew may have died if Ms Woodward did not do it. Many observers feel it was an error not to have done this in the first trial. And would the defence directly challenge the credibility of the parents who say they had nothing to do with Matthew's death nor know of any other possible explanation for it?

In that scenario, the videotape, about which the jury was told nothing, could become critical. While *The Independent* has not seen it, the police sources say that it lasts 31 minutes and was filmed by Deborah Eappen, the elder brother, on the floor of the home painting while his mother repeatedly asks him to say that Ms Woodward harmed Matthew. He replies in the opposite sense, with one-sentence remarks along the lines that he loved Louise, Matthew loved Louise, and Louise loved them.

It is also possible that the defence could examine the behaviour of Brendan himself. Aged two years and eight months when Matthew died, Brendan was a boisterous boy who, according to the testimony of Ms Woodward on the stand would occasionally leap on his brother from his full height.

Also under examination now is the role of EF Au Pair, the agency that placed Ms Woodward with the Eappens in November last year. It is widely assumed that the Eappens will shortly file a civil suit against the agency and that the couple may be hoping to get as much as \$20m in a liability settlement.

Theoretically, a manslaughter outcome could harm EF Au Pair's interests because it implies recklessness on the part of their client, Ms Woodward. Sources say, however, that they would be insured in that instance. If Murder Two is maintained, the insurance would not apply but EF Au Pair could claim that because the killing was intentional it has no liability.



Symbolic gesture: Jacquie Pilling, 22, one of Louise's former schoolfriends, tying a yellow ribbon to the Elton village signpost after yesterday's service at the parish church. Photograph: Francesco Cillini

Prayers as campaign gains momentum

Louise Woodward's friends and neighbours in her home of Elton prayed yesterday for all "whose vision of the world is seen through prison bars". Parishioners at the churches of St James's and St Mary's in the neighbouring villages of Iwer and Thornton-Le-Moors were asked to offer up their prayers for 19-year-old Louise and her family.

At St Mary's, the Rev Ken Davey read out letters of support from the Bishop of Birken-

head, the Rt Rev Michael Langrish, and former vicars of the parish.

"I have been overwhelmed by the telephone calls and mail coming in from all around the world," he added.

Over £6,000 in contributions and donations came into The Rigger pub yesterday morning. You are not alone. There are an awful lot of people out there thinking and praying like you."

Before the sermon Mr Davey

added: "I am not preaching about Louise. I am too emotional to actually do it. Secondly, I haven't had enough time to sit down and reflect on the situation."

Many parishioners filing out of the small chapel wore the yellow ribbons which have come to signify the struggle to bring Ms Woodward back home.

Hazel Mayamba-Kasongo, a fund-raiser, said that the community was considering setting up counselling lines for people

all over the world who are pouring out their emotions as a result of Louise's conviction. "We are getting phone calls from people who are grieving," she said.

"We need counsellors desperately. People are crying their eyes out at what has happened."

Ms Mayamba-Kasongo said money was pouring in from all over the world and that the campaign to bring Louise home was gathering momentum.

— Kate Watson-Smyth

Local party faces Hague's wrath over expulsion of women candidates

A north London Conservative association is being investigated after the shock expulsion of two of the party's women parliamentary candidates. Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, reports on a case that will give William Hague the chance to flex his muscles.

Senior Tory sources expect tough retaliatory action to be taken against Hendon Conservative Association this week, following the recent expulsion of Jane Ellison and Sheila Scott, two of the rare breed of women who fought as Conservative candidates in the last election.

The women have been told they were expelled under rule 17(i), which gives the local party's executive council power to "strike off the membership

roll any member whose declared opinions or conduct shall in its judgment be inconsistent with the objectives of the association."

The *Hendon and Finchley Times* newspaper has already reported a highly contentious - and defamatory - allegation made during the executive council proceedings.

But the Conservative leadership is expected to view that as part of a running battle within the local party - which has already resulted in the departure of the agent, the association secretary, and the Young Conservative chairman.

Mrs Scott, who contested Stoke on Trent South at the last election, told *The Independent*: "I refute absolutely the allegations made against me." A former chairman of the Hendon Association, she is chief executive of the National Care Homes Association and a local councillor.

Ms Ellison, customer com-

munications manager with the John Lewis Partnership, was the Tory candidate in last year's Barnsley East by-election, and fought Barnsley East and Moxborough in the last election.

A Conservative Party spokesman said: "Members locally have raised complaints about the conduct and running of the association."

The investigation is being carried out by the Conservative National Union, which represents the party's voluntary wing - one of the elements Mr Hague wants to bring under more central control so that he can exert tougher, Blair-style discipline in cases where the party risks being brought into disrepute.

If tough action is taken against Hendon, however, the notorious party could have a fight on its hands.

George Ward, the association chairman and managing director of Bonusprint, the high street photographic developers,

was the owner of Grunwick Processing Laboratories, the north London photographic processing firm that became the focal point of protest over trade union rights in 1976.

Striking members of the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff were sacked by Grunwick and the subsequent dispute made strong headlines because of angry picket lines joined by other trades unions and Labour MPs - including such moderate figures as Shirley Williams.

Mr Ward won his case in the courts, with a House of Lords judgment in his favour, and it is believed that the Grunwick dispute was one of the factors that influenced the Conservative anti-union legislation of the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher, herself a north London MP.

Mr Ward was out of the country and unavailable for comment when *The Independent* called Bonusprint on Friday.

Surrogate mother set for legal battle

The biological father of a surrogate mother's newborn baby has begun a legal battle for custody of the child after she refused to give him up. Kate Watson-Smyth reports on the looming custody battle.

Clemens Peeters, the biological father of the baby he has named Julian, has filed application for access at Middlesbrough County Court and plans to file another for custody.

Karen Roche, 32, who gave birth to the child she calls Stuart eight days ago, agreed to bear the child for Mr Peeters and his wife, Sonja, for £12,000. But she broke her side of the agreement and even claimed to

have had an abortion to prevent the Peeters from having the baby.

In an interview with BBC TV's *Panorama* programme, to be shown tonight, Mr Peeters accuses Mrs Roche of using the child as "some kind of merchandise that could be sold to the highest bidder".

He says: "We feel that's our baby, we are the parents that are meant to have the baby. We are the ones that think we can give the proper love and care it needs."

The legal struggle is the culmination of nine months of wrangling over the fate of the child.

Mrs Roche has described how she "bonded" with the baby while it was still in the womb.

In an interview with a national newspaper she said: "I

wouldn't sell him for a million pounds. The joy he is bringing us is as good as winning the Lottery. There is no deal to sell our baby to the Peeters or anyone else."

"Even before he was born, I had bonded with him. Then, when I saw his beautiful unwrinkled face, the bond grew deeper."

Mrs Roche claims the Dutch couple broke their side of the deal by failing to fulfil promises to visit Britain to monitor the pregnancy.

She added: "If the surrogacy arrangement hadn't gone wrong, I know I would have been strong enough to hand him over. I wouldn't have allowed myself to bond with him in the way that I have, both before and after the birth."

The relationship between Mrs Roche and the Peeters

soon turned sour after she was put in touch with them by Kim Cotton, Britain's first surrogate mother, last January.

Mrs Roche later decided she would not hand the child over and threatened to have an abortion. Another deal was also struck with a second couple, Ed and Jean Hunter.

Mr Peeters tells the programme of his "total disbelief" when he and his wife read in the newspapers that Mrs Roche had not terminated his child but was in fact in the process of negotiating to hand over the baby to another couple.

"We thought that the worst thing that could ever happen to us had already happened. It's like does the nightmare ever stop."

Panorama: The Surrogate will be shown on BBC 1 television tonight at 10pm.

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— *Lucy Ward*



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Doctors given new guidance on intimate moments

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists is calling for a series of changes in the way intimate examinations are carried out. The move is a response to reports that women are frequently left traumatised, angry and confused by the experience.

Among the most radical of the suggestions is for a chaperone to be present while the examination is being carried out, regardless of whether the doctor is male or female. "Chaperones are the ultimate safeguard for the patient against abuse during examination," the college advises.

The new guidelines aim to make women more at ease and are a response to a directive from the British Medical Association to the Royal Colleges to establish standards of good practice.

Doctors have been advised not to discuss a woman's body weight until after she has dressed, even if it has a relevance to her gynaecological problems. They have also been warned about being patronising.

Dr Patricia Crowley, the chairman of the committee that produced the guide,

said: "There are some doctors who out of habit call patients 'dear' or 'love' and it could be interpreted as condescending...."

"It is particularly important during intimate examinations, which doctors may be doing on automatic pilot. It may be open to misinterpretation, so it is a time to be more formal."

To underline the point, the guidelines stress: "It should be very clear to the patient that any questions asked during the examination are entirely technical, relating to the site and quality of the pain, and that the women's feelings and sexual response are not being discussed."

Dr Crowley added that much of the information in the report was common sense but had never been formally written down before.

The report also addresses the controversial issue of training medical students conducting intimate examinations, which Dr Crowley said had to be carefully balanced with the need not to exploit the woman patient.

— Ian Burrell



What a carry on: Doctors are being warned of the need for formality during intimate procedures

Breast scan consultants face censure

Two consultants at the centre of a breast screening alert are expected to be criticised in a report to the Commons today. Glenda Cooper examines the lessons learned from a health crisis which affected thousands of women.

Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, ordered the review of the East Devon Breast Screening Service by a team of experts led by the Chief Medical Officer, Sir Kenneth Calman, following concerns over the interpretation of breast scans of nine women, two of whom have died.

The six-year-old EDBSS is managed by the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital Healthcare NHS Trust, which announced in June that its two consultants, Dr John Brennan, employed by the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital, and Dr Graham Urquhart, from Torbay hospital, were to have further training in breast screening.

The alert began after NHS medical staff raised concerns over 12 mammography films of women screened by the service.

The women developed cancer between the initial screening and before routine recall.

During hospital treatment, NHS medical staff expressed concern about the interpretation of tiny calcium deposits shown on the original mammogram film, and asked the NHS National Breast Screening Programme in Nottingham to review the 12 scans.

Problems were identified with interpretation of films of nine of the women, two of whom later died. The alert led to the review of almost 4,000 screenings.

About 2,000 women called helplines set up by the RDE

Trust, the Exeter and Plymouth Nuffield hospitals where Dr Brennan also worked, and a private hospital in Torquay where both consultants also worked.

The women at the centre of the alert were among 60,000 screened by the EDBSS over a five-year period.

The Calman report is expected to say that the two consultants used outmoded and inappropriate treatment for abnormal test results.

Possible future changes could include increasing the number of mammograms by reducing checks from every three to every two years. But the cost of this change may prove prohibitive in the cash-strapped National Health Service.

Some doctors fear that the two consultant radiologists will be made scapegoats and blamed for the problem as a quick fix political solution which would appease the public's unease.

The Calman report will reveal that there is room for improvement in general organisational and personal performance in the East Devon service.

The Government must now decide whether to spend more cash on a national review of the service. It could also decide to order independent monitoring of the breast screening service.

Meanwhile, the two radiologists will probably face disciplinary action by their healthcare trusts over their role in the affair.

The two radiologists have refused to comment about the inquiry findings from their respective homes in Devon. But it is understood they rejected as "invalid, inaccurate and unsubstantiated" personal criticisms levelled in a draft report. And it is thought they angrily reject any suggestions that they were "uncaring".

The Department of Health and the Devon Trusts also refused to comment last night.

Gene link claimed with intelligence

A UK-based researcher reckons he has found a gene that helps determine intelligence. Is it a vital contribution to the 'nature v nurture' debate, or a muddying of already confused waters? Charles Arthur, Science Editor, reports.

The discovery of a gene which appears to contribute to general intelligence is a finding which Professor Robert Plomin says marks a breakthrough in scientific endeavour.

But Professor Plomin, an American based at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, faces opposition from both scientific and other groups who say that his work is unethical and should not be continued. They say that the availability of genetic testing will lead inevitably to pre-natal evaluation of people's intelligence - and in some cases to their being needlessly labelled subnormal.

Yet the results themselves are controversial. They have not yet been published in any scientific journal, though it is understood they are being considered by *Nature*. That means they have not been reviewed independently for any faults in the testing used.

Furthermore, the gene identified by Professor Plomin,

which is called IGF2R, on chromosome 6, has long been known to genetic researchers. But they have identified it as being involved in some way in pre-natal growth - hence its name, "insulin-like growth factor 2 receptor". Mutations in this gene are linked to increased incidence of liver cancer, leading other scientists to conclude that it acts as a tumour suppressor in its normal role.

It has never been associated before with intelligence. But on a Channel 4 *Equinox* programme to be broadcast tonight, Professor Plomin says that his six-year study shows that IGF2R occurs more frequently in smart children than average ones.

David King, editor of *GenEthics News* and the instigator of the "Campaign for Real Intelligence", has sought to stop MRC funding for Professor Plomin's work. "It will make people believe that everything we are is determined by our genes," he said.

If confirmed, however, Professor Plomin's work seems certain to reopen a long-running argument. Jonathan Glover, a philosopher at Oxford University, says: "Anyone can ignore a new piece of science for a certain amount of time, but then the problems start to catch up with us. This raises huge and important issues which, in a democracy, we should be discussing now."

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Stop button for music cassettes

Little more than a decade after the first compact disc players went on sale, heralding the death of the vinyl record, the last rites are being read over its sidekick, the cassette tape.

Pre-recorded tapes, which made music affordable for students and the less well off, are gradually being phased out by the recording industry, which hopes that consumers will switch to the latest generation of digital technology.

The amount of music available on cassette, whether old classics or new releases, has dwindled steadily. According to data from the British Phonographic Institute, only 19 per cent of new albums are now released on tape, compared to 65 per cent in 1989.

Record shops, where cassettes are squeezed into ever smaller corners, say that while consumers still want to buy tapes, many recordings are not produced any more in the cheap format.

The new version is a small disc, about half the size of a CD, on which music of digital quality can be recorded as well as played. Sony's version is called the MiniDisc, while Philips has produced the digital compact cassette. The companies also own two of the world's largest recording labels.

So far, the technology has been slow to take off in this country. As with compact discs, consumers need to buy new stereo equipment in order to use it.

The hardware being launched by electronics manufacturers ranges in price from £199.99 to £699.99.

Sony, which is to spend £5m on promoting the new systems in Britain in the next few months, believes that its MiniDiscs could make traditional tapes obsolete. The company points out that in Japan, 60 per cent of all hi-fi systems use MiniDiscs instead of cassettes.

Record shops say that popular titles such as the Beatles' *White Album* and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* are no longer available on tape. Gillian Rodney, duty manager of Tower Records in central London, said yesterday that customers often requested recordings that were no longer made. "As a policy, we try to stock everything, but it appears that record companies are not producing cassettes like they used to."

— Kathy Marks



Ultimate sales machine: 'Prestige brands have benefited from economic recovery at the expense of volume products'

BMW sets limit on its own success

The BMW is becoming such a common sight on British roads that the German company has decided to cap its sales next year. Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, finds prospective buyers could face a long wait for their keys.

The dilemma for BMW is one most car-makers would die for. Its British sales have risen so fast in the past two years that the company is worried the famous brand could be devalued to little more than an upmarket version of Ford or Vauxhall.

The numbers speak for

themselves. This year, BMW's British operation expects to sell 62,000 cars — enough to grab more than 3 per cent of the entire market. It has turned the UK into BMW's third most important market overall, and its second biggest export earner after the US, where sales are on course to reach a record 115,000 this year.

In August alone, a record 19,764 BMWs were registered in Britain, a rise of 30 per cent on the year before and more than the company's entire sales in 1981. Most garages had sold out of stocks long before the registrations turned a wheel.

So concerned has BMW become by the figures that it has called for what managers describe as a period of "consolidation". In practice, this means that the company does not want the increase to continue unabated and has set itself an internal limit of 70,000 sales as its absolute maximum.

"This is a question of balancing our brand image. We could set a target of twice that number but it would damage our brand," said a spokesman. The scale of the increase has even surprised BMW itself.

Two years after the launch of the 5-series saloon, thought by many in the industry to be the most accomplished of all contenders in the "executive" bracket, sales are running almost 40 per cent ahead of 1996. Put simply, buyers no longer want to be seen in offerings from "volume" manufacturers

when, for just a little more money, they can drive a BMW or an Audi.

The popularity of the 5-series speaks volumes for the transformation in the British car market, which has seen Ford's share plunge so far this year to just 18 per cent. The 5-series has surpassed all its competitors as the best-selling executive saloon, including the Rover 800, Vauxhall Omega and Ford Scorpio.

BMW puts the surge down to the boom in company profits, which has encouraged directors to change their cars more often or move further and further upmarket. "Prestige brands have clearly benefited from the economic recovery, at the expense of volume products," said the company.

Computer burglars spread net

Burglars have discovered a new way to find out when your home computer will be unguarded: ring up and ask. Charles Arthur, Science Editor, explains why a computer survey offering free software is something you can do without.

"Hello, I'm carrying out a survey on behalf of a major software supplier. Do you own a computer at home? You could be eligible for free software if you take part in our survey..."

Tempting words, but an independent group has warned that the only survey being carried out is of whether you'll be at home during the day. If not, you'll get an unwelcome visit from burglars.

The Internet Content Register (ICR), a consumer protection group focussing on the Internet in the UK, says it has learnt of seven home burglaries over the past two months, each preceded by a bogus telephone survey. All the victims lived near the M6, in Staffordshire, Yeovil and Cheshire.

Martin Hawkes of the ICR said: "They seem to be trawling the Internet for Britons who give out their phone numbers in discussion group postings or Web sites. Then they contact them and get more information."

The burglars then zero in to try to find how valuable their computers are and when they will be unguarded.

In a formal warning, which it has checked with Scotland

Yard, the ICR says: "The questionnaire appears to be pretty routine — inadvertently, you will be providing information about your working hours, nightlife, your computer equipment and your net worth to a burglar. It would appear that people are being burgled within a couple of days of receiving one of these survey calls."

Sometimes the burglars target more than one person in a company. "We heard about a case where one person was burgled in this fashion after receiving a call at work. A couple of days later someone else at his workplace got the same call — but because he had heard about the other person, he didn't give out anything."

The key information that the thieves are really looking for is the answer to questions like "Would it be convenient if we come along tomorrow at about, say, 11am to install your free software?" If the answer is no, that offers the perfect opportunity for a fruitful break-in.

The ICR suggests that if you receive one of these calls do not provide any personal information about you, your lifestyle or your computer equipment; try dialling 1471 immediately after the call to obtain the telephone number of the caller; and, make a note of anything strange and contact your local police or the ICR with as much information — date, time and mannerisms, strange questions — as you have available.

If you have already received such a call, contact your local police, and advise the ICR so it can update its records. The ICR is on 01782 506916 or www.internet.org.uk.

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Jiang admits mistakes over Tiananmen

President Jiang Zemin of China was set to leave US shores last night after a visit that took him from coast to coast and back again, but left Americans as sceptical as ever about China's intentions. But towards the end of his visit there were signs he was getting their message, as Mory Dejevsky reports.

At Harvard University on Saturday the penny finally seemed to drop. After a cliché-ridden chronicle of China's achievements, from the invention of gunpowder to the victory of Mao's revolution, Mr Jiang said he would take questions.

The professors, sensitive to charges that they had packed the audience with China-sympathisers, did their best. With shouts of protest from outside the hall audibly, they picked two questions from the hundred they said they had received. The first asked about the army's assault on Tiananmen Square eight years ago, the second about Tibet, the third - taken, apparently at Mr Jiang's impromptu instigation, from the floor - about his understanding of American-style democracy.

But it was the first that signalled the change. True, the Chinese leader spent most of his answer defending his own efforts - as mayor of Shanghai and national leader - to find out about people's concerns and he did not mention Tiananmen Square. But then he said: "It goes without saying ... we may have short-

comings and even make some mistakes ... However, we have been working on a constant basis to further improve our work."

There, for the first time, in answer to a question about Tiananmen, was an admission of error. The connection was not direct but it was there to be made - perhaps the first time the word "mistake" had crossed a Chinese leader's lips in that context.

It was said US officials had tried time and again to convince Mr Jiang to express at least regret for the Tiananmen events. At his press conference with President Bill Clinton on Wednesday there had been only justification. The "correct conclusions" had been drawn: the government had to act to preserve stability and unity in a country of 1.2 billion people.

This led him into disagreement with Mr Clinton, who condemned China as being "on the wrong side of history" on political dissent. Next day Mr Jiang seemed to soften a little, when he talked to Asia specialists about the need to improve democracy and the rule of law in China.

Mr Jiang's tour was seen by many China-watchers as comparable with Deng Xiaoping's epic visit in 1979, when his smiles and spontaneity won many hearts. Mr Jiang left an impression of efficiency, some potentially valuable trade deals, but little warmth.

But there is just a chance, that, with his impressions of US hi-tech and the New York Stock Exchange, Mr Jiang may also have taken back some of his hosts' questions about China. If so, Americans may in time come to regard his trip more charitably as time well spent.



Trigger happy: Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Russian Prime Minister, joining in celebrations in the Urals city of Izhevsk to mark the 50th anniversary of the invention by Mikhail Kalashnikov of the AK-47 assault rifle. Photograph: Reuters

US votes on nitty-gritty of daily life

Americans vote tomorrow, not for a president (that was last year), nor for Congress (next year), but for state governors, mayors and statutes in ballots that are the very stuff of local democracy.

The West and South lead the way, in referendums, with a number of contentious issues to be decided. In Oregon, voters must decide whether they stand by their vote three years ago to support euthanasia, while the neighbouring state of Washington will consider the medical

use of marijuana. Houston, Texas, will become the first big city to vote whether to scrap its policy that gives preference to women and members of ethnic minorities for public-service jobs and grants.

In New York, Rudolph Giuliani, the Republican mayor, is expected to be given another four-year term for bringing safety and new life to a city seen in the past as ungovernable. His Democratic challenger, Ruth Messinger, is seen offering no viable alternative.

As so often, New York is the exception here. Many other contests are seen, even at this late stage, as too close to call. The races are especially close in the two states where the governorship is at stake.

President Bill Clinton stopped in New Jersey yesterday to rally support for the Democratic challenger, Jim McGreevey. He is hard on the heels of the present - and first female - governor, Christine Todd Whitman, by dint of tapping into popular discontent

over high property taxes and car-insurance rates. Ms Whitman's major achievement - cutting state taxes by 30 per cent in her first two months of office four years ago - has proved less of a vote-swing than her camp hoped, even though it made her a model for Republican governors across America. The race for state governor is just as tight in Virginia, where local taxes - this time an unpopular state tax which assesses cars as taxable personal property - are also the main issue.

Greek-Turkish rivalry takes centre stage at Balkans summit

Leaders of the Balkan countries arrived on Crete for a summit aimed at building economic co-operation but dominated by expected talks between long-time rivals. The Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz, whose

country is undergoing a period of increasing tension with the Greek hosts, was among the first to arrive.

Yilmaz is expected to hold bilateral meetings with the Greek Prime Minister Costas

Simitis today. Relations between Greece and Turkey have deteriorated in recent weeks. Athens has accused Turkey of numerous military violations of its airspace, coinciding with joint Greece-Cyprus war games.

Mr Yilmaz was followed by the Albanian Prime Minister Fatos Nano and the Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, leaders of neighbouring countries at odds over the ethnically flammable region of Kosovo.

Jakarta culls banks in IMF deal to salvage economy

Indonesia today announces details of deregulation measures aimed at boosting the economy after closing 16 banks in a quick start on an IMF-backed economic-reform programme. Sources said several of the banks liquidated on Saturday were associated with politically well-connected business figures, including members of President Suharto's family.

The banking and financial sectors are key areas for reform under a package agreed with the IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and individual donors. Indonesia went to the IMF last month to stabilise the tumbling rupiah and restore confidence in financial markets, battered by currency turmoil across South-East Asia. - Reuters

Voyage of hope

A ship packed with 800 illegal immigrants, including 200 women and children, arrived in the south Italian port of Santa Maria Di Leuca. The *Hussan Beirut* was carrying Turks, Pakistanis, Egyptians and people of other nationalities. Port officials said there were so many people on board that there was standing room only on the decks and below. A number needed medical assistance but there were no immediate reports of serious injuries. - Reuters

Brazil's wayward rocket

Controllers had to destroy the first rocket launched in Brazil when an engine failed to ignite, inflicting a blow on the country's budding space programme. The launch vehicle quickly disappeared in cloudy skies above the Alcântara base in the north-eastern state of Maranhão. It was to have carried Brazil's second data-gathering satellite into orbit to collect information on the environment. - Reuters

Japan, Russia talk peace

President Boris Yeltsin of Russia and the Japanese Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, winding up informal talks, pledged yesterday to seal a peace treaty by 2000.

A territorial dispute has for decades blocked the signing of a treaty formally ending Second World War hostilities but the leaders said their talks in Krasnoyarsk heralded a new era of co-operation. Mr Hashimoto said the negotiations would be based on the 1993 Tokyo Declaration, which called for resolution of the dispute based on international law and justice. On Saturday the two men unveiled a plan comprising initiatives to boost Japanese investment in Russia and co-operation in trade, energy, transport and training. - Reuters

Vatican in repentant mood

The Vatican said anti-Jewish Christians offend God and told Catholics to admit past errors against the Jews and not repeat them. The stand against was delivered at the end of a symposium on the religious roots of anti-Semitism. It followed a speech by the Pope, who on Friday told the theologians that many Christians failed to live up to their faith when the Nazis set about exterminating Europe's Jews. - Reuters

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Iraq bars three Americans from UN inspection team

Iraq has ordered American members of the UN's monitoring team to leave the country by Wednesday. Is Iraq right to believe that the UN's search for its weapons of mass destruction is just an excuse to maintain sanctions?

It may be the end of arms inspections as Iraq has known them in the six years since the end of the Gulf war. The rules of the game are already changing. "Iraq today turned away in a polite way three Americans who were with a United Nations arms-inspection team arriving from Bahrain," said a diplomat in Baghdad yesterday.

Iraq is emphasising that its quarrel is with the US, not the UN. "On Monday there will be no American inside Iraq (taking part) in inspections," said Taha Yassin Ramadan, Iraqi Vice-President and close confidant of President Saddam Hussein. "There is no retreat from our decision until things are put in order," he said.

The US and UK, on the contrary, have repeatedly said that the Iraqi challenge is to the UN as a whole. They do not rule out military action. "US forces are always ready," said General Anthony Zinni, who commands

US forces in most of the Middle East. He added: "The situation in the Gulf is tense even now. The possibility that operations could be conducted in our region is very real."

Both sides are moving cautiously. But the fact that President Saddam has chosen to provoke a crisis now probably means he is feeling stronger. It is not just that three permanent members of the UN Security Council - Russia, France and China - think that the US and Britain are being too hardline. It is also that the re-entry of

Iraqi tanks into Iraqi Kurdistan last year and the failure of the US to respond effectively - President Bill Clinton ordered missiles to be fired at targets 500 miles from where the Iraqi army was in action - showed the limits of what the US was prepared to do.

Iraq has always felt that the UN Special Commission (Unsc) on monitoring weapons of mass destruction was largely an excuse to keep the country isolated. Only when Unsc reported that Iraq had no missiles, nerve gas, chemical weapons or nuclear materials left would the economic siege of Iraq - above all the ban on its oil exports - be lifted.

But at the same President

Saddam made extraordinary efforts to hide the remains of the programmes he developed in the Eighties - when he was allied to the US against Iran - to give Iraq weapons of mass destruction. In 1995 Iraq was still prepared to spend \$2m on gyroscopes taken from Soviet SS-18 missiles and which could only be used as guidance systems for Iraqi rockets.

In the lead-up to the Gulf war the Iraqi leader was obsessed with a desire to develop nuclear weapons. He had two teams designing a nuclear warhead which could fit on the missiles it had available. It did have chemical and nerve gases available in 1991, but did not dare use them for fear of a retaliatory strike.

When Unsc was first established, Iraq regarded Rolf Ekeus, the Swedish diplomat who was its chief, and David Kay, the UN's chief field officer in Iraq, as wholly under American influence. They played a curious game of cat-and-mouse with Iraq, as Unsc pursued hidden equipment and documents from military base to military

base. In 1995 Mr Ekeus said that Iraq was in substantial compliance with UN resolutions on revealing its weapons of mass destruction. But this was almost immediately contradicted by the defection of General Hussein Kamel, President Saddam's son-in-law and former head of Iraq's military industries. He immediately disclosed that one of Unsc's chief translators was an Iraqi spy.

Uncertain of how much General Kamel would reveal, Iraq planted a million pages of documents on its strategic weapons programme in a chicken farm he owned outside Baghdad. The Unsc inspectors noted that, given their place of storage, the papers were amazingly clean. A gardener at the farm casually mentioned to an Arabic-speaking inspector that Iraqi special forces had delivered the papers to the farm a few days before.

President Saddam's determination to preserve a few missiles and some chemical and nerve gases was always irrational.

The only logic behind it was that giving them up would show weakness. He wanted to show that military defeat had not humbled him. But in doing so he provided the US with the excuse it wanted to keep Iraq isolated and maintain its predominance in the Middle East, which had reached its peak with the Gulf war.

BY PATRICK COCKBURN



Burning issue: Iraqis protesting in Baghdad at the offices of the UN Development Programme

Photograph: AP

Effort to restart Palestine peace talks

Israel and the Palestinians head back to the negotiating table in Washington today, with Israel saying "practical progress" can be made but the Palestinians gloomy that it is evading any real issues. "We will take part in the talks, despite the fact that they have no chance," Yasser Arafat was quoted as saying in the Israeli *Maariv* newspaper.

The talks will be convened under the stern eye of the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, who wants Israel to commit itself to a "time out" in settlement expansion and who is also reportedly pushing for a commitment on the date and scope of an Israeli troop withdrawal from rural West Bank land.

But the Palestinians say they fear the Israeli Foreign Minister, David Levy, leading the delegation, is not authorised to negotiate on those issues. "He can hold talks all day long, but your Cabinet didn't empower him to do a thing," Mr Arafat told *Maariv*.

The talks were held up for a week while the government debated the positions Mr Levy would take. On Wednesday the Cabinet authorised him to fly to Washington for the talks. The foreign ministry said he was "empowered by the Cabinet to talk about all the issues on the agenda," including a time-out and West Bank withdrawal. A government spokesman said Israel was looking for "practical

progress" in areas such as the opening of a Palestinian airport and seaport in the Gaza Strip, called for in the existing Israel-Palestine agreements but not yet implemented.

An Arafat adviser, Ahmed Tibi, said the Palestinians would concentrate on settlement activity and the Israeli redeployment - "in other words, the issue of land" - at the Washington talks, and that all other issues were secondary.

If there is no progress on those issues, he told Israel's *Army Radio*, "the talks are doomed to failure, and we will get sucked into a whirlpool, into the dynamic of a resurgence crisis." - AP

Conscript tells of Algeria's torture chambers

Reda, a conscript in the Algerian army, says he felt no emotion as he murdered a man at his checkpoint earlier this year. But watching men tortured with an electric drill left him distraught. Only when guerrillas recognised him, he reveals, did he decide to seek asylum in Britain.

"They gave us vaccinations in our backs and then told us to inject each other before we went out on sorties. It was an off-white liquid which we injected into each other's arms. ... It made us feel like Rambo. ... We were on a road-block, stopping anyone we suspected of being a terrorist. If a man had a face like a terrorist, if he had a big beard, he was shot. There was a man with a beard walking by the petrol station. I told him to stop. He said 'Why should I stop?'"

Reda was in Loodn oow, but his memory was on a road 20 miles from Algiers. He had been on military service, part of a commando unit outside Blida. "The man was rude, so I

killed him. It's like I was dreaming and it wasn't me. I didn't remember it till my friends told me. ... The bullets hit him in the chest. When he died, he cried: 'There is only one God but God, I hope God will forgive me and that all humanity will forgive me.'"

Knightbridge may be an odd place to seek forgiveness but from time to time Reda went - for the killings, for the torture he witnessed, for the soldiers he believes were murdered by his own army. He began his military service in the town of Skikda, then moved to Biskra for weapons training. "We were told that all people were against us. We were taught how to recognise terrorists - by their beards and *khamis* robes, their Islamic clothes."

On 12 May this year Reda was flown to Blida, south of Algiers, for active service in the anti-guerrilla war. On his first sortie into the village of Sidi Moussa on 27 May, he and his comrades ordered families from their homes and while searching their houses he says they stole all the money and gold they could find. Reda says the soldiers beat the people with rifles and then took 16 male vil-

lagers away for torture. "There was an underground room at the Blida caserne called the *kanellah* - the 'killing room' - and the prisoners were all given names by the interrogators, names like *Zitouni*. The men were bound and stripped and tied to a chair and fished with cold water. Two soldiers stood in front of each prisoner and asked questions. Then they started with the electric drill."

Reda fidgets with his hands

BY ROBERT FISK

as he tells his awful story. The drills were used on the prisoners' legs. Reda says he saw one army torturer drill open a man's stomach. It lasted four hours with each prisoner - if they lived, they were released after a week. At one point in his story, Reda asks his younger brother to leave the room; he doesn't want his family to know what else he has seen. "There was a cable about two inches in diameter and they put it in the ears of

anus of the prisoners. Then they threw water at them. Two of the meo began cursing us. ... And the torturer would shout 'Yarakab - God damn you - so much for your God.' The torture went on 24 hours a day. I was only a conscript. I watched but I didn't take part."

Three meo died during the torture session, Reda says. The soldiers told their families they would have to give them 50,000 dinars (£300) if they wanted the bodies. "The women scratched their faces (in grief) and we said the men had died of heart attacks but they didn't believe us. The coffins were sealed. They knew we'd killed them."

In June, Reda was asked to participate in a protection force around the same village during a raid by regular troops. "We had to go in if there were flares sent up - but there were no flares and we went home after two hours. Next day ... we heard that in this same village a massacre had taken place and 28 villagers had been beheaded. And that made us start thinking about who did it. I started to think that our people had been the killers."

Two days later, Reda says, he and fellow conscripts were cleaning the barracks and searching the clothes of regular troops for cigarettes when they found a false beard and mustache, a perfume worn by devout Muslims. "We asked ourselves, what were the soldiers doing with this beard?" Reda concluded that this army unit may have carried out the Sidi Moussa massacre but his alarm worsened when 26 of his fellow conscripts were driven off to another barracks at Chrea. "They later brought all

their bodies back to us and said that they had been killed in an ambush but I am sure they were executed because they weren't trusted any more. There had been no wounded in the 'ambush'. Maybe they talked too much. All our soldiers knew these meo had been eliminated - because earlier, before they were taken away, we were told not to talk to them."

The end of Reda's military career was not heroic. His teeth were kicked out by colleagues, he says, and he was imprisoned for a week after he was seen giving bread to prisoners. Then, ambushed while on roadblock duty on the edge of Blida, he was recognised by two armed Islamists. "They were friends of mine and they saw me in my paratrooper uniform and my green beret. One of them shouted at me: 'There is plenty of time left in the year to get you. Take care of yourself and your wife and child.' I and three of the other conscripts ran away with the help of locals who gave us civilian clothes. Now I am a deserter and I am between two fires - between the terrorists and the government."

Reda turned up at Heathrow a few weeks later, pleading for protection. The Algerian authorities claim they know him - and that he fabricated his story of military atrocities to gain asylum in Britain. But why would Reda seek asylum in Britain in the first place, along with dozens of other members of the Algerian security services? Reda's last news from Algeria speaks for itself: eight relatives in the suburb of Boufarik - not far from Blida - have had their throats cut.

LONGINES

L'ELEGANCE DU TEMPS DEPUIS 1832



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Farms' in a hand

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Farms' future found in a handful of beans

Britain's farmers have started trials on a crop which could take over tens of thousands of acres of British countryside. Oliver Tickell suggests a combination of environmental concern and hard business sense could lead to a boom in the growth of soyabeans in the UK.

A desperate shortage of protein in the wake of the BSE crisis, and the advent of new crop varieties adapted to Britain's cooler climate and shorter growing season, has prompted British farmers to grow increasing acreages of the soyabean.

Most of the world's soyabeans, a protein-packed vegetable crop, are grown under the

eight trial plots have been planted and harvested in England. Indications, according to a newly formed trade body called the Soyabean Association, are distinctly promising.

A British seed merchant, Rohin Appel Ltd, says the results have been "sensational". Two 15-acre plots in southern England planted with a new line of seed bred for British conditions have yielded 1,200 kilos to the acre.

Edward Wilmot, a spokesman for the company, is optimistic: "There is a huge market out there", he says.

Wil Armitage, director of the Soyabean Association, manages 970 acres of farmland in Leicestershire and reports harvesting about a tonne per acre from a 2.5 acre trial plot.

"And that's on frost-prone land 550ft or so above sea level where we can't even grow maize economically", he says.

to its future. "Field beans give us roughly 20 per cent protein, but soyabeans give twice as much or more, up in 42 per cent. There's no other crop to match it."

A spokesman for the National Farmers' Union (NFU) said that members would be watching the trials with interest: "If the market is there our members will certainly consider it. Farmers and growers are going to have to look at new products and new methods of production."

He added, however, that the NFU was not advocating any crop over another: "We believe you cannot deny the advance of science and we know some consumers are prepared to buy GM products."



Island path: Builders replacing blocks on the causeway to St Michael's Mount in Cornwall

Photograph: Sam Morgan Moore



Beans means cash: Home-grown soya is proving a success with UK farmers

Photograph: Rui Vieira

hot skies of Brazil and the southern United States. Demand for the British beans has been increased by widespread consumer unease about genetically modified (GM) soyabeans imported from America, which refuses to separate out or label GM foodstuffs.

With soyabeans trading at about £200 a tonne, farmers are interested in soya as a cash crop - whether for animal or human consumption.

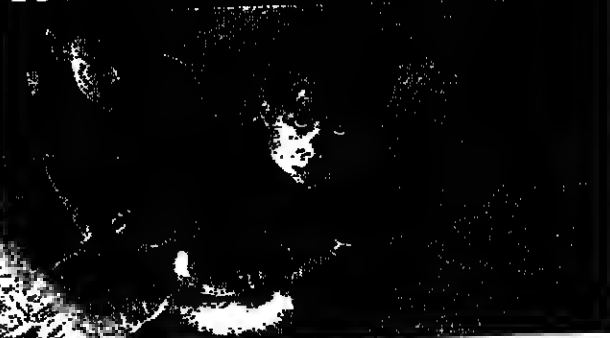
Another attraction for farmers is that soyabeans attract an EU subsidy of about £150 an acre when grown on registered arable land. Already, this year,

Mr Armitage's main interest in soya is as a high-protein feed for his prize-winning herd of 140 pedigree Holstein-Friesians, in the wake of the BSE crisis. "Over the last few decades bonemeal has provided a superb and extremely cheap form of protein", he says.

"But now we've lost bonemeal because of BSE, and that's left us with a huge protein deficit. Dairy farmers all over Britain are crying out for low cost, high quality protein."

Simon Brodrie, of Nickson seeds in Lincolnshire, believes that soya's high yield is the key

MILLIONS FACE STARVATION IN NORTH KOREA



This winter may prove to have devastating consequences for the people of North Korea. For the third consecutive year, a combination of floods and drought has ruined harvests and destroyed homes. In parts of the country, children are already having to live on a diet of tree bark and roots. Without urgent help, many will not survive the bitter cold of the North Korean winter.

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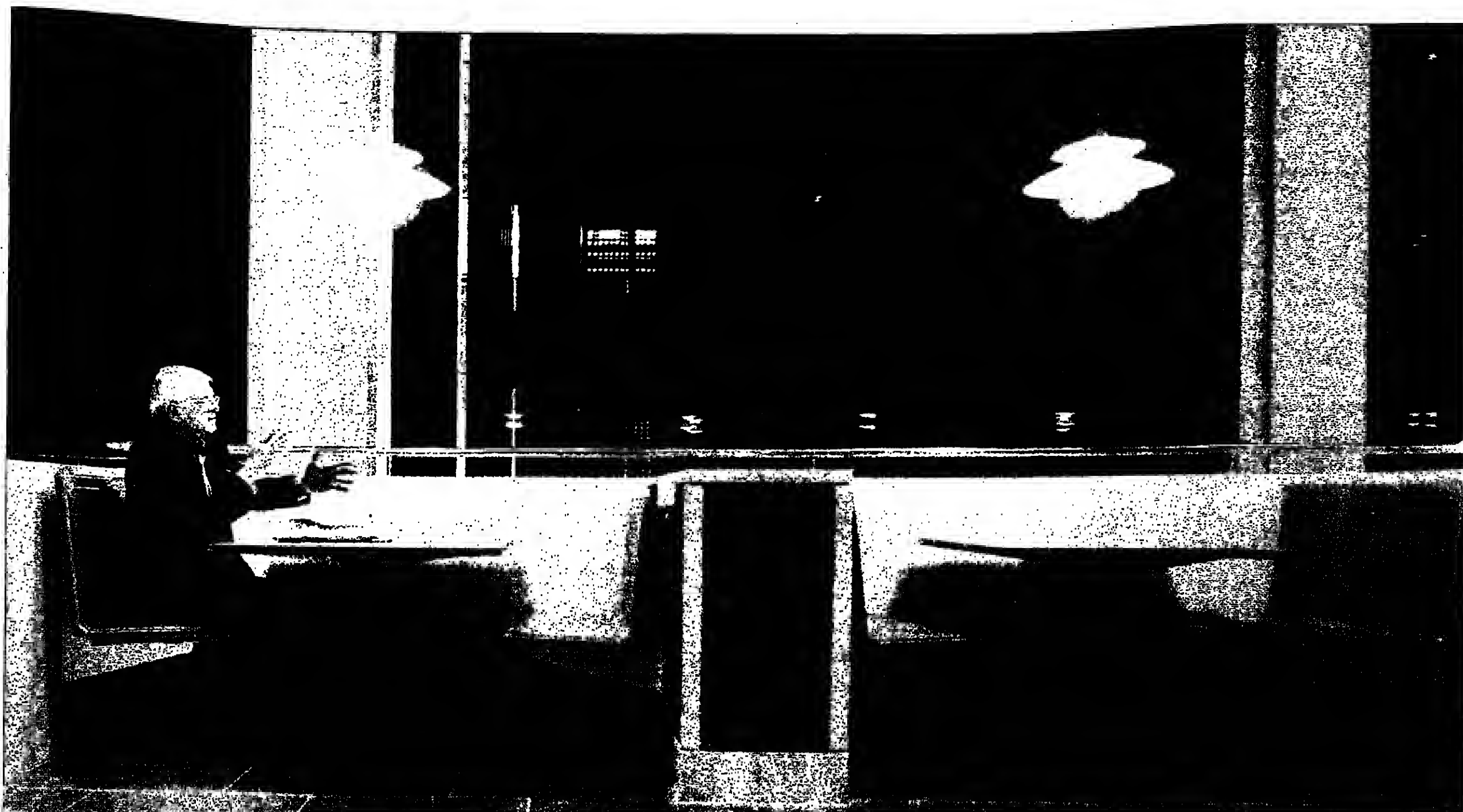
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13/INTERVIEW

THE INDEPENDENT
MONDAY
3 NOVEMBER 1997

Read all about it ... architect finishes Great British Disaster



'I wish I'd brought my camera,' says Colin St John Wilson, finally inside his controversial British Library... 'The day it opens I will watch like a stoat to see how people choose their seats'

Photograph: Glyn Griffiths

He's endured more personal abuse than any architect this century, and has had no new commissions for a long time. But Colin St John Wilson, mastermind of the British Library, has no regrets. After all, wasn't Christopher Wren fired before St Paul's was finally finished?

There were two things I was worried about. First, I was late. But so was he. And it was eight years in his case, which made my 15-minute unpunctuality seem paltry. But the other thing was that my expertise in architecture is, well, shall we say limited. And I was there to talk to the man who has, for the past 30 years, engaged in the titanic struggle of creating the most expensive building ever constructed on these islands.

Colin St John Wilson is, in his own words, "the architect of the Great British Disaster". Otherwise known as the British Library, it is to open to readers at the end of this month - some 35 years after the project was first proposed, at a cost of almost five times the original £16m budget and with room for around a mere third of the 3,500 readers and only half the 25 million books originally planned for.

On top of that it is the building that everyone loves to hate. Even before it was built, Prince Charles, in his "monstrous car-bundle" phase, likened it to "an academy for secret policemen". The art critic Jonathan Meades labelled it "a lump of boding on a cosmic scale". And the House of Commons National Heritage Committee compared the huge red-brick building to "a Babylonian ziggurat seen through a funfair distorting mirror" and damned it as "one of the ugliest buildings in the world". But it was not the architecture I wanted to discuss with him, so much as what it has been like to endure more than three decades of lack of co-operation, frustration and lacerating personal abuse at the hands of the great and the good.

"He's a kind of martyr," a friend had told me beforehand. "He had a vision and he's been broken by it." But the figure who greeted me in the foyer of the new building seemed not to match such a description. He

wore a black corduroy suit with a vivid blue shirt and tie. For a 75-year-old he seemed enormously sprightly and his speech patterns surprisingly modern. He waved his hand excitedly around the entrance hall with its floor of soft-coloured Purbeck stone, its columns of pitted travertine marble and its soaring white walls and curving ceiling. His critics, whose knowledge of the place is generally limited to its unprepossessing exterior, are, one suspects, in for a surprise.

"As an exercise in preconception and prejudice, there just isn't a parallel," said this Emeritus Professor of Architecture at Cambridge University, who was appointed to the project in 1962. He then immediately found some. Christopher Wren took as long to build St Paul's and was put on half-pay for 10 years and fired before the end. When the Houses of Parliament were built, Disraeli said that the architect should be hung in public. And the architect of the Sydney Opera House, Bjorn Utzon, still won't talk to the press after the savaging he received for his design.

"It's put me out of business," he says, simply. Since Prince Charles's remarks in 1988, he doesn't even get on the shortlists, let alone win commissions. "Being the architect of the Great British Disaster I have no work and my practice, the actual partnership, has now dissolved. The team of really fine architects - many of whom gave 12 or 15 years to the project - have dispersed." One of them was his wife Mary Jane Long. "She accepts no self-pity at all. If I whinge I'm told to belt up. When it became clear that we weren't going to get any more work she set up her own business and is doing well. I might now do some work with her. At 75 I haven't done so well that I can afford not to work now."

By the marble staircase to the new reading rooms he pauses to look up at the tapestry - the largest woven this century - which he commissioned of the painter *ff Not*, *Not* by R B Kitaj. It is powerful, vivid and disturbing.

"That's the idea," he says. "Books should disturb." But should libraries? The reasons for the vitriol that has been poured upon him are manifold. But not least is the anguish surrounding the demise of the sublimely beautiful old reading room in the British Museum which was until recently the heart of the Library. A coalition of its present bookish users, former readers



PAUL VALLEY
TALKS TO COLIN
ST JOHN WILSON

wistful for their romantic student days and traditionalists in love with the room's historic associations with Marx, Freud, Dickens, Wilde, Shaw and other lustrous names, together created a storm of fury which was fierce and unabated.

"It was very demoralising. But then most of my blood is stubborn Scots. My Dad also had a hard time [he was Bishop of Chelmsford and known then as the Bolshevik Bishop]. He did a lot of hanging in there - opposing the government over the Spanish Civil War, making a speech in the House of Lords on the atom bomb, which was received in deadly silence. So I carried on." The unhappy thing is that it is not just his father who is not there to see his achievement. "Sadly all my family are dead," he says slowly, as if surprising himself with the thought, "and so are many of the friends I would have wanted to show it to."

The saga began in 1962 when it was decided to extend the British Museum's library in the heart of Bloomsbury. Wilson was then a lecturer in the school of architecture at Cambridge, and in private practice with the department's professor, Sir Leslie Martin. In 1964, the two were commissioned for the project, which one civil servant told them with masterful understatement "may take quite a time to build". Wilson, who had to his credit a number of university buildings, turned down the job as head of the architecture department at Yale to do the library.

Today he does not regret the decision,

though it was to bring him 30 years of grief. "I've always really wanted to commit myself to something really big. Next to a cathedral, which is to my mind the most transcendent of buildings, a library comes next; it is in its way also a sacred building." But the first two schemes, on the museum's Bloomsbury site, came to naught. Then, in 1972, the Museum Library and the national Science Library were merged, by an act of parliament, to form the British Library. A bigger site was needed and one was found on the railway goods yard on the Euston Road to the west side of St Pancras Station where Wilson's library now stands.

When Shirley Williams approved the scheme for the last Labour government in 1978, the plan was a three-stage project. But a year later the Thatcher government began what was to prove a tortured process of cuts and changes. The first phase was subdivided into three phases. There then followed at least five major shifts in the planning. "It was stop-go for years. It was simply appalling. We never knew with each bit of funding whether we'd get the money for the next bit, and so it went on." During the waiting he kept busy working on the details, making more than 2,000 separate drawings and sketches for different parts of the library.

"We tried to be pro-active and keep working on how we would approach the next stage if it were approved. I had to keep staff on the payroll - you can't just chuck them out and then get them back in six months' time. It was so wasteful. We had to build things - like a secure reception area and a tunnel to deliver priceless manuscripts - which were going to be knocked down. It was a waste of more than £1m. The government was pretending to be realistic but pulling up the plant every 18 months to inspect its roots and see how it's doing is the most expensive way to build."

Eventually the project drew the attention of the National Audit Office, the nation's spending watchdog. It launched an investigation which catalogued 230,000 construction defects. The Tory government had failed to provide adequate management of the 150 sub-contractors. For ideological reasons ministers insisted that the project should follow a "construction management" costing policy - instead of fixing the price at the outset, the government insisted on agreeing payments to contractors as it

went along. The idea was to bring greater control and flexibility; the reality was a chaotic nightmare of sub-standard work. The newspapers had a field day with lurid, and not always accurate, reports about 200 miles of moving bookshelves which juddered, 5,000 sprinkler heads which were found to be rusty, and 2,000 miles of electrical wiring which had to be ripped up and replaced.

None of this was the architect's fault but he seemed to bear the public opprobrium. "One hard moment was switching on the car radio and hearing the tail-end of an interview with David Mellor, who was saying, 'The only thing wrong with the British Library is the architect.' It was libellous and completely cynical on his part; but he knew I wouldn't sue. Then there was William Waldegrave who began talking, when a lot of it was already built, of turning the place into a book store with a tunnel to the British Museum. That was the worst moment of all because going off at half-cock would have been worse than not doing it at all. It would have been deeply humiliating."

But Wilson enters not to all this reluctance. He is most anxious now to let his building speak for itself. And so it does. The blank-walled exterior may look like an oversized version of a toy-town Tesco but it belies the grandeur of an interior which feels imposing without being intimidating.

The entrance hall is welcoming and self-explanatory. "You shouldn't have to ask your way in a public building." Up the broad staircase behind the reception desk is a central mezzanine which is simple in understatement, to the left is the main Humanities Reading Room, to the right is the Science wing, at the back is the restaurant.

We mount the stairs, whose bannister rail is wound with a soft leather which entices the hand upwards. "I wanted to treat each reader with respect," he says, in the hope that each individual will savour the feel as he does. The doors are of American oak with handles of dark African teak. The rich smell of leather and wood mingles. "We sense spaces like bats. We hear them too. And smell them."

At the top of the stairway, the King's Library, a massive six-floor tower of black glass, shoots up from the basement to the high ceiling like a massive sculpture. "I work from inside out, and ask what is the task the feature has to perform. Then you dis-

cover the inherent poetry." The free-standing glass stack will display at its edge the 60,000 leather-clad, gold-tooled volumes of King George III's library in fulfilment of the royal bequest that the books should be on show to the public and kept 'entire and separate'. It is the source of a clever *trompe l'oeil* - the highly polished black marble surrounding the glass shelving gives the illusion that its sides plunge down into the bowels of the building where four separate levels contain 200 miles of shelves, all kept at a steady 17C and 50 per cent humidity.

We enter the main reading room. The curving line of its high ceiling is broken by levels of terraces which create the impression of hanging gardens. The result combines loftiness with intimacy. Where the old reading room provided a single environment, the varying heights of the new one create spaces in which readers of different temperaments can find a haven which suits them.

"The day it opens I will watch like a stoat from up there," Wilson says, pointing to the upper terrace, "to see how people choose the seats that will for many of them become a lifetime habit." Each leather-topped desk has a lamp, a plug for a laptop computer, a modem socket and a light to indicate that the reader's books have arrived along the conveyor belts of rolling wheels, which, on a daily basis, can deliver 25,000 books in minutes.

"I wish I'd brought my camera," Wilson says with sudden ferocity. He has been talking of how the room's lights increase in power as the daylight fades when a shaft of sunlight on the ceiling catches his eye. "Look at that light and the abstract patterns it is making." It's a flash of his vast enthusiasm: the key to the determination, patience and faith that have driven him.

"What keeps me going? A sense of history and a sense of purpose, which is partly classical, partly religious. I believe with the Greeks that it is in the nature of everything to fulfil itself. And I do believe with William Blake that everything that lives is holy and has a purpose. We are here to contribute, which doesn't mean you mustn't expect a fight."

Some fight, Wilson once described it as his Thirty Years War. Is it now won? "I will wait to hear from the readers. Then I'll know."

Deborah Ross is on holiday



DINAH
HALL

Why it pays to be polite - especially to gullible neighbours

There must be a lesson to be learned from the 10-foot-high brick wall on to which we now stare from our kitchen. The architects of this wall, our neighbours, despite being 10 years our juniors are the most grown-up people we have ever met - they invited us round for a drink once and religiously took the bottle back to the kitchen every time they refilled our glasses - not, I think, because they didn't trust us but out of some quiet notion of etiquette. With such impeccable manners, they naturally consulted us every step of the way on their plans to convert their house in to a palace, and because they were so polite, it would have seemed churlish not to agree to replacing our view of trees with an enormous brick wall. This has meant entertaining their builders who have been constructing the wall just outside our French windows; it is a bizarre experience to sit eating your cornflakes in front of an audience who look away every time you look up. We began to feel like an exhibit from the Turner shortlist.

The lesson to be learned from the brick wall, by the way, is that it obviously pays to be polite. But I've noticed bus conductors don't see it that way. I've re-

cently discovered public transport. Usually I travel on those little buses where the driver doubles as conductor, which have resulted in an epidemic of public politeness. Maybe it's the physical proximity of the driver, or simply recognition of his dual workload, but nine out of 10 passengers now say thank you when they disembark. No doubt as a reflection of their threatened status, the rudeness of the few remaining conductors seems to have increased. "Is there any room upstairs?" asked a German tourist on the number 10 bus. The conductor snarled that he didn't know; he never went upstairs

because it gave him nose bleeds. It soon became clear that the man was a complete xenophobe. At Marble Arch an ancient American man got on - I think he was playing up to stereotype. "Oxford Street. Is this where the university is?" - but that was no excuse for the staggering rudeness of the conductor who told him to sit down "and stop breathing on me". I had intended to fill the slot in my social conscience left vacant by not having to boycott South African oranges with worrying about the job security of bus conductors. But if they're all like him, the sooner they're extinct the better.

The highlight of my week was interviewing childcare guru, Penelope Leach. Through her books she was a kind of surrogate mother to me so it was hard to restrain myself from kissing her feet, but I was determined not to do as other journalists had done that week, using the opportunity for free advice on their own children's sleeping problems. Nevertheless, as I did feel she had left me high and dry when the children reached the age of five (cut-off point for childcare manuals), I felt I might at least share with her some of my pride in the achievements of my first Leach baby, now 13. Just

the day before I had sniffed his shirt and detected, for the first time, the whiff of a manly armpit. Now personally I think it's gross when American mothers celebrate their daughters' first period by throwing a menstrual shower or whatever it is they do, but I was surprised to find myself feeling pleased at this olfactory milestone. When they're little you boast to everyone about their first smiles and words - I don't see why you're not allowed to feel the same pride in their adolescent development. I would tell you more, but he won't let me in the bathroom for some reason.

14/LEADER & LETTERS

In for a penny, in for a euro. But who will lead the fight?



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The aftershocks of a great event are only just beginning to reverberate through our national life. A week ago, Gordon Brown announced that the Government was working towards the replacement of the pound. The sudden reopening of geological rift running through the Conservative party is only one of the effects of this clear public statement. Equally significant, although less remarked upon, was the German Chancellor's declaration that he would head the rules to keep a seat for Britain at the top table drawing up the plans for the single currency. Important, too, was the confirmation that the main organised economic interests, the TUC, CBI and Chambers of Commerce, are committed to, and preparing for, abolishing the pound in five to seven years' time.

When Mr Brown's words on monetary union fully sink in, they will change our national psychology. This is it. We are going in. All right, we do not know when exactly. We do not even have a target date.

But we know we are set on a course. Helmut Kohl would not have put his coat on a seat for Britain if Tony Blair had not made it quite clear that he intended to sit there, and soon.

Barring an unforeseen change in economic circumstances, in the Chancellor's phrase, the next election will be fought as a dress rehearsal for a referendum on the single currency soon afterwards. At some point, all the great and good who believe in the single currency will have to come together to campaign for a Yes vote. We do not know when that will be, although the Government intends it to be "early in the next parliament", which could coincide with the issue of euro notes and coin in January 2002. (Until then, the so-called "single currency" will only mean the irrevocable fixing of exchange rates.) But the Prime Minister and Chancellor effectively launched the Yes campaign last week. Most of the eminent opinion formers who would be on the Yes commit-

tee have identified themselves publicly in the past seven days, including most of the big hitters in the Pro-European Party-Within-The-Conservative-Party. Paddy Ashdown even talked of "a grand coalition" to work for the euro.

This is certainly politics on a larger scale than we are used to. Boris Johnson, Euro-sceptic commentator, yesterday mused about the Tory party becoming "an ox-bow lake left by the flow of history". Equally, however, Mr Blair is taking a big risk in associating Labour with the interests of big business against the little-guy nationalism of William Hague's Tories. All the emotional arguments are on the side of the Pouljadists: the thousand years of history, sovereignty and the sovereign's head, decentralisation, price rises being sneaked past little old ladies who can't do the conversions in their head, fears of unemployment, and who-won-the-war-anyway anti-German sentiment.

Sure, the argument will look a little dif-

ferent when euro mortgages are two percentage points cheaper than sterling ones, when Marks and Spencers start taking euro notes and multinationals price everything internally in euros. But Mr Blair cannot rely on it being a replay of 1975, when an initially hostile public was swayed by the soothing assurances of the Establishment.

So the Prime Minister deserves restrained praise for taking a stand against the drift of public opinion for once, although it has to be said that this is a form of leadership that would not be recognised by his alleged role model, Margaret Thatcher. He is the most cautious of risk-takers, always with an eye to the escape route. It was not the Prime Minister but the Chancellor who made the Commons statement last Monday. It was not the Prime Minister but the grandees of industry and the Tory party who stood up to plead the case for the euro last week.

This is leadership by nudging the crowd in the right direction and putting

oneself in the middle of it. It is good politics, but it is hardly Brave New Politics. Through his Chancellor, Mr Blair has now disowned the coarse nationalist slogans - all about St George and the slaying of dragons - he penned for the Sun during the election campaign. That hints out to have been a cynical ploy for the votes of Middle Little England; the real Mr Blair tipped us the wink the weekend before polling day, saying: "If we win this election, we will have done so without ceding any ground that cannot be recovered."

It is not pretty, it is not open, and it is not altogether honest; but it has confounded the Euro-sceptics, including those in Mr Blair's own party, and it has kept the right-wing press wolves at bay. However, the single currency referendum is going to have to be fought and won, and it won't be won from behind. One day, Mr Blair will have to emerge from the crowd and lead. The sooner that day comes, the better.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Woodward trial

Sir: It is entirely natural that Ann Treanman should want to defend her country and its legal system ("Britain's xenophobic response hides the real issue - a clash of cultures", 1 November) but in doing so she displays the same xenophobia she claims to detect in Britain.

In my experience, disquiet at the Louise Woodward verdict is caused not by anti-American prejudice but by examination of evidence which quite clearly failed to establish guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Of course cultural differences cause misunderstandings but surely it is no more xenophobic to question the verdict of an American court than it is treacherous to question the verdict of a British one. KEVIN DAY
London SW16

Sir: Ann Treanman raises an interesting point about the way British xenophobia surfaces when one of "our" girls is convicted in a foreign country. But in the Louise Woodward case it seems to me that xenophobia may, equally, have worked the other way.

If the Brits see themselves in relation to the US as two countries divided by a common language, it goes the other way too. Isn't it possible that an American jury felt the same kind of bias towards its own that Ms Treanman accuses us of feeling on behalf of Louise? ANGELA NEUSTATTER
London N5

Sir: Here in America, press coverage of the Louise Woodward trial has focused on the reaction of the British people toward the verdict and sentencing in Massachusetts. The sentiment in the UK seems to be that the trial was a spectacle and that Woodward was utterly incapable of killing the baby boy.

But most Americans accept that even fair trials can result in the wrong verdict, and that anyone, regardless of race or class, can be guilty of murder. While we sympathise with the Woodward family, we know that the system by which Louise was tried was fair, if not perfect in its results. Americans especially ap-

preciate having cameras in the courtroom, where we can keep an eye on the process to ensure objectivity and fairness.

What we do not want is for our system to emulate yours, where only five per cent of trials are by jury, where the state wields enormous power over the individual through the police and prosecutors, and where there is little or no oversight of the machinations of judicial officers. PETER FREEMAN
Washington DC

Sir: A jury is only a committee and, like any such body, is likely to lean in the direction of those who happen to be its most dominant and vocal members. How many members of how many juries have not stifled reasonable doubts out of a combination of deference and weariness?

Acceptance of the reliability of jury verdicts is an act of

faith; it ought to be founded on experimental research. P J STEWART
Oxford

Sir: If Louise Woodward was not responsible for the death of Matthew Eappen, who was? Experts should be looking seriously at the behavioural problems of Matthew's brother Brendan for possible solutions.

The British nanny Catherine Blood says she turned down a job with the Eappen family because she thought Brendan could do damage to himself because of his hyperactivity and aggressive manner (report, 1 November). Just what damage could an over-boisterous two-year-old do to a baby? MARTYN LUMLEY
Wallasey, Merseyside

Sir: I wonder if the jury in the Louise Woodward trial were affected by the fact that Barry Scheck, her senior defence

lawyer, was the man who "got off" O J Simpson? That trial has been seen as a miscarriage of justice and it is possible that the jury felt that Mr Scheck was too clever a lawyer to be trusted. ROSALIND LUND
Cambridge

Sir: Why do Professor John A. Davis and Arlette Lister (Letters, 1 November) presume that a mother should be the parent to remain at home? What about fathers giving up work to look after their children? KATHLEEN ROBB
Chelmsford, Essex

Business and EMU

Sir: I would like to question the assumption that "business" is unequivocally in favour of EMU ("Heseltine calls on Tories to fight Hague's Euro-phobia", 31 October).

When the Institute of Directors conducted a vote after

a debate on EMU at our 1996 Annual Convention, nearly 30 per cent of attendees were in favour of EMU; nearly 70 per cent were against, with a small margin of don't knows. These figures were broadly replicated by a subsequent opinion survey of our members. And earlier this month, I was speaking at a conference of small businessmen and a "hands-up" poll indicated a majority against the single currency, a sizeable minority of don't knows and a handful in favour. There was also a distinct feeling that the large companies were bullying the small.

It is clear that there are some advantages of EMU membership for some sectors of British business. This is especially true for large multinationals which operate on an EU-wide basis and companies which export heavily to the rest of the EU and have been hit recently by the very

strong pound against the Deutschmark. But for the very large majority of companies which are not in these very vocal categories, the advantages of EMU membership are altogether more elusive. Many of them remember all too clearly the disastrous experience of ERM membership when the UK was unable to trim its interest rates to domestic needs. And they clearly say no to EMU for the foreseeable future. RUTH LEA
Head of the Policy Unit
Institute of Directors
London SW1

Dignified death

Sir: Reporting of the Annie Lindsell case (29 October) may have led to the misconception that she had won a right not previously available to her. In fact the court did not rule on the lawfulness of her GP setting up a syringe driver

containing diamorphine in doses appropriate to relieve her emotional and physical distress, because no such declaration was required.

Case law in this country has long established that drugs required to alleviate physical distress at the end of life can be lawfully administered even at the risk of some shortening of life. The first case to make this explicit was that of Bodkins-Adams as far back as 1957.

The case has achieved nothing and should not have come to court. The ethical and legal issues are complex but the euthanasia debate cannot be truly informed unless we appreciate that such humane and dignified deaths as that envisaged are already fully available to us under the existing terms of the law. DR KILIAN DUNPHY
Macmillan Consultant in Palliative Care
St Albans, Hertfordshire

The end of duty-free

Sir: I am concerned that a decision on the abolition of duty-free shopping within the EU has been made without fully debating the effects, not only on those of us who work in duty-free and who risk losing our jobs within the next 18 months, but also on those who travel within the EU ("Duty-free plan goes ahead", 31 October).

Duty-free sales at the airport subsidise the landing fees paid by airlines and in-flight duty-free sales or sales on board ferries also subsidise the cost of travel. From July 1999 only will travellers be unable to buy the duty-free products they see as a welcome perk, but they will inevitably be paying more to travel.

It is not only those people who work in duty-free whose jobs are at risk. Other industries, notably the Scottish whisky industry, rely heavily on the duty-free sector for sales and will also face job losses if the proposed abolition goes through. LYNNE PRESCOTT
Chandler's Ford, Hampshire

News audiences

Sir: Your report (27 October) is wide of the mark in claiming that the BBC North West's regional news programme *Northwest Tonight* is in "the only region in the whole of Britain where the BBC out-rates its ITV rival".

Last month, BBC regional news programmes outperformed their ITV competitors in five out of the 10 English regions in terms of audience share, and overall the BBC share of the available audience for early evening news in September was 38 per cent compared with ITV's 33 per cent share. NIGEL CHAPMAN
Controller
BBC English Regions
Birmingham

E-mail vs snail mail

Sir: Peter Wynn Davis (Letters, 1 November), thinks a privatised Post Office can compete against e-mail. This e-mail letter took about five minutes to reach its destination, at a cost of about 1p in telephone charges. Enough said. STEPHEN JONES
Barcelona (via e-mail)

Growing up but remaining true to Auntie: the next 75 years of the BBC



MILES KINGSTON

You must be fully aware by now that the BBC is celebrating its first 75 years - indeed, you must be sick to death of hearing how Lord Reith invented the dinner jacket, how ITMA won the war and how the BBC made almost all the best TV programmes in the world and then proceeded to wipe them - so here is something quite different. A history of the next 75 years of the BBC.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, we proudly present "The History of the BBC From Now to AD 2072". So here we go bravely into the future...

1998 Sir Christopher Bland announces that the digital revolution is almost upon us. John Birt announces that his

knighthood is nearly upon him. Broadcasting House fills up with managers, while programme makers are relegated to outer London.

1999 The digital revolution is here! Sir John Birt inaugurates a 24-hour rolling news service. The first news item is a report that Sir John Birt has inaugurated the 24-hour rolling news service.

"We are entering a new era," says Sir John Birt. Millions switch off. Outer London overflows with junior managers, while programme makers are henceforth restricted to provincial towns, or "centres of excellence".

2000 Sir Christopher Bland announ-

ces that the digital era is coming to an end. In the next period of excellence, all politicians and trouble spots will be fitted with secret touch pad sound/vision sources which can be switched on from London.

This means that camera and sound people will no longer be needed to broadcast news, which will henceforth broadcast itself, as all newsworthy people and places are now wired for sound and vision.

2001 Sir John Birt reveals that this will mean the creation of a second, parallel, non-stop rolling news channel.

2003 An order goes out from the Director-General that all man-

agers must wear dinner jackets when writing motivational memos to staff, and all corporation accountants must wear dinner jackets at all times.

2004 Programme-makers are relegated to offshore rocks and mountainous regions, known as "islands of excellence".

2005 There are now five BBC parallel rolling news services, 24-hours-a-day. "In this post-digital age it is imperative to have a choice of non-stop news services," says Lord Birt. "Only with multiple news services can you get balance."

2007 To mark the tenth anniversary of Diana Princess of Wales's

death, all BBC channels go over to rerunning broadcasts of the week in 1997 when the BBC went collectively mad, gotraging Dianaman and turned into *Hellos* magazine.

2008 A top secret report reveals to Lord Birt that no new programmes have been made since AD2003 and stresses that something must be done.

2009 Lord Birt announces a series of major new comedy programmes, including *The 24 Hours News Quiz*, *Have I Got Rolling News For You* etc. etc.

2010 Lord Birt announces plans for the new Auto-Access revolution. Wearing an Armani white

dinner jacket, Lord Birt explains that the new Auto-Access technology enables viewers and listeners to tune in to a programme at a time other than when it is actually being broadcast. "Until now," he says, "we have been fatally limited to tuning into only those programmes which are actually going out at the time. But what if we can tune into any programme going out at any time? Especially in the past? I am proud to say that new technology now allows us to tap into the past as the past happens!"

His critics say that this is just another name for churning out repeats, but Lord Birt deals with this criticism in the way he always has; he ignores it.

2012 A recurrent rumour has it that Lord Birt not only has no intention of retiring but that new technology will allow him to stop ageing when he reaches the age of 70 in AD2014. Substance is lent to this story when he says:

"The most important thing in any organisation is continuity, and continuity can only be achieved by maintaining the excellence of leadership."

His critics say this means that he will never resign. His critics mysteriously die.

The rest of this 75 year future history of the BBC can be found on Website BBC75.doomsday@bt.com/obitdotcom.

15/COMMENT

Junior school to coal face, we can make a difference



YVETTE COOPER

Yvette Cooper, a former economics writer on *The Independent*, has just passed her first half year as an MP. She always knew that parliamentary politics would be a weird way to make a living. But does she still feel the battle to be elected was worth the trouble?

When a former colleague from *The Independent* asked me, "So what do you MPs do then?" I found myself spluttering and pulling anxious faces. The truth is, six months after being elected as the Labour MP for Pontefract and Castleford in West Yorkshire, I still don't really know how to answer that question.

I know I work long hours, and that there's never time to fit in all the things I want to do, never mind all the things I ought to do. But I couldn't give you a job description for the life of me. Nor is there such a thing as a typical day for me to describe in order to explain or justify my existence.

For example, last week I ate turkey drumsticks and lemon sponge in a junior school hall and talked about the Spice Girls to seven-year-olds and reading standards to their headteacher. Just half an hour later I was touring the shop floor at the local After Eight factory, moh cap on my head, meeting staff and persuading the manager to take on several teenagers under the Government's welfare-to-work programme.

One minute I'm sitting in the corner of a library listening to a recently bereaved old man mumble about children playing football against his back wall. The next I am quaking in a *Newsnight* studio as Kirsty Wark asks me about the Government's statement on a single currency. Of a morning I could be at the coal face with miners at Kellingly pit. Three hours and a fast train from Doncaster later, I could be sat in a green leather armchair in a plush House of Commons tea room, being briefed by the Treasury whip on the intricacies of the Finance Bill legislation.

But what do I do? What do I achieve? On Monday, in a cool four minutes, I got one Pontefract man's Child Support Agency contributions reduced by £100 a month. All it took was one phone call from the MP and the CSA official admitted to the error that the poor father and my assistant had been struggling to draw their attention to for weeks. Sadly the hours spent on the hundreds of other constituents' cases - CSA, housing, nuisance neighbours, cycle routes - rarely yield such rapid results.

Curiously even when I do get a hit, I feel guilty rather than elated. After all, what if I hadn't made that four-minute phone call, and what about all the countless other cases there isn't time to follow through with such personal attention? In my nightmares I am walking down a long street lined with good causes, but I only have a pound to give

and I don't know where or when to stop. But the real power MPs have for progressive change goes beyond individual cases. It lies in our licence to interfere. Now that we have a Labour government I find everyone wants to meet their Labour MP - employers, administrators, teachers, doctors, the list is endless - to talk to me, to take seriously my comments and suggestions. And of course we have access to ministers at the national level, too. The opportunity that creates to make connections, build bridges and alliances, in order to get sensible things done is considerable.

Take the New Deal for the young and long-term unemployed. Under the direction of government, local partnerships are being formed between the Employment Service, local authorities, chambers of commerce, training organisations, colleges and others to work out how to implement the detail.

I remember well the baffled incomprehension on local officials' faces when Wakefield district MPs invited themselves along to the meeting, too. One grey-suited man stared in alarm at his neighbour, "What's it got to do with them? Who is this bossy woman?" written all over his face. He spent the rest of the meeting in stunned silence as we chivvied and agitated, enthused and suggested, and made very clear that we intended to be heavily involved.

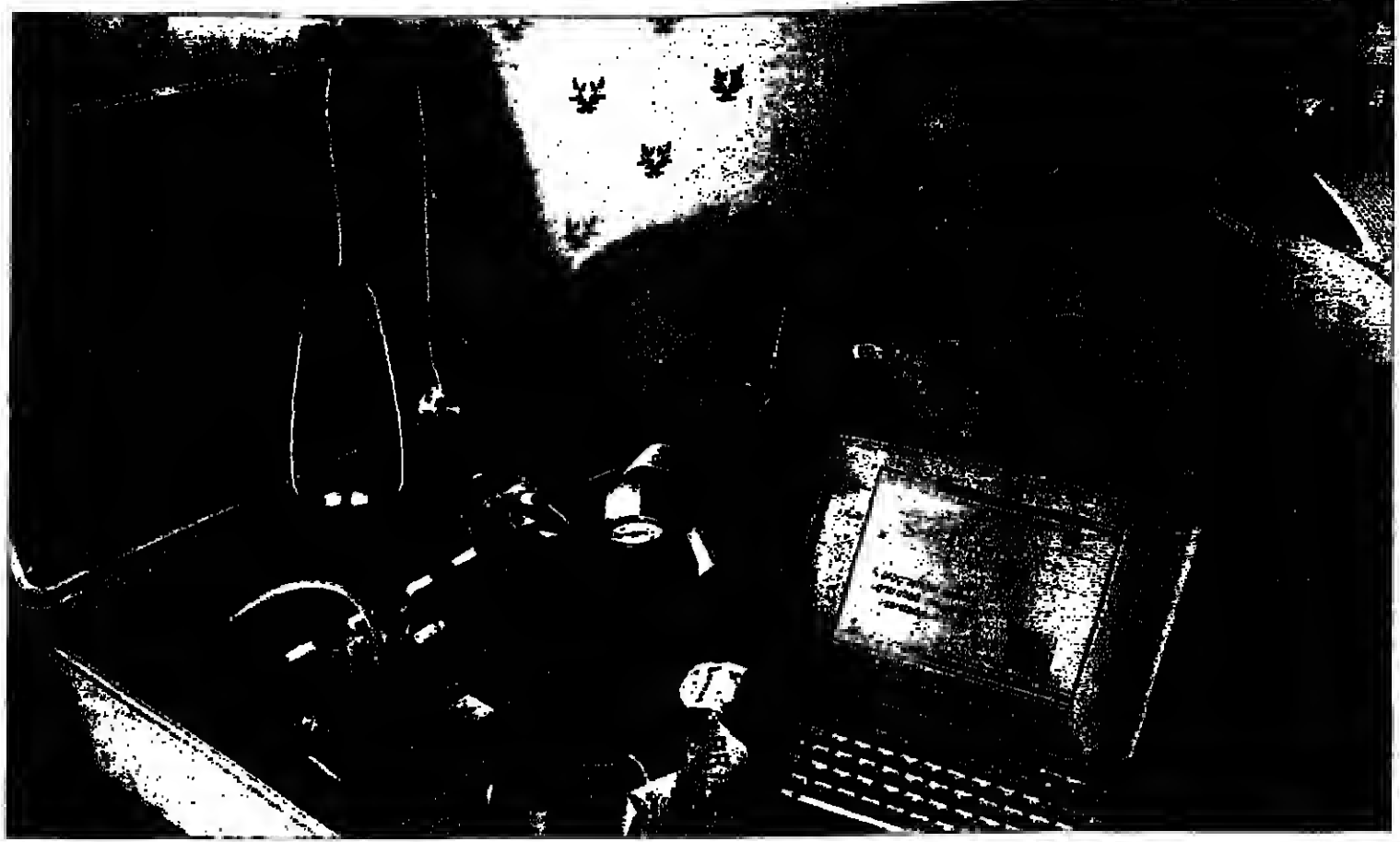
Other MPs are doing the same. The big challenge, to make the New Deal work, is to sign up local employers - something MPs are often better placed to do than local administrators. Many of my colleagues have held breakfast meetings with local businesses to persuade them to take on a teenager or two, and every few weeks we gather in Westminster to compare notes and collect grumbles or titbits to feed back to the minister responsible.

Because the fact is, making the New Deal work in practice has an awful lot to do with us. We fought for this, and we swore we would deliver it. For my entire adult life persistent unemployment was one of those lamentable problems we anguished about. I'm even more sensitive about the problem now, representing towns which suffer badly from long-term unemployment. Facing the pavements with balloons and stickers during the election campaign, this was the one issue, more than any other, on which I promised local voters that Labour would make a difference.

Now suddenly we have a chance to do something really bold to change the lives of those who are suffering most. The cash is there, the structures are there, all we need is a bit of local imagination and enthusiasm to make it work, and ensure we get people into real jobs, not just pointless schemes. This is traditional Labour territory: jobs, jobs, jobs, underpinned by education, education, education. That is why I chivvy, badger, and interfere. That is why so many MPs are stomping the streets to leave no business unturned. We believe that our participation will improve the chances of success.

Seven months ago, I was still a journalist, delighting in the healthy scepticism and intelligent individualism that makes broadsheet newspapers so essential to a thriving democracy.

In contrast, I fear now that former journalist colleagues will find me earnest, idealistic and breathless. So be it. We have a unique opportunity. Whatever the ordinary frustrations, constraints and troubles of modern politics, those of us lucky enough to be on the Government's back benches are in an unusual and exciting position. If we can't seize the moment now, we shouldn't be doing the job.



Dr Nitschke and his killing machine: 'I find myself in a position all the time of breaking the law. I don't like it at all' Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

Dr Death asks some painful questions

In Australia and the United States, euthanasia has replaced abortion as the big moral question of our time. There is an urgent need for proper debate, says Dr Philip Nitschke, who has helped several terminally ill people to die. He speaks to Ann Treneman

Dr Philip Nitschke is the only doctor in the world who has legally helped patients kill themselves. He helped four people to die - though some would call it murder - during the eight months in which euthanasia was legal in the Northern Territory. He says that he couldn't help but feel a bit like an executioner when he turned up on the doorstep at the appointed hour, killing machine in hand. But now that euthanasia is illegal again, he feels like a criminal as he tries to help the people who constantly ask for his help.

Executioner or criminal? Legal or back-street euthanasia? Right or wrong? It's the kind of thing that we should be debating here because - like it or not - euthanasia is a subject whose time has come. In the US and Australia it is seen as the great moral question of our time and a subject that has replaced abortion in terms of ethical talking points. Tomorrow in the far western American state of Oregon voters will decide whether it should be legal. Three Australian states are considering some sort of legislation. In Holland, where it is decriminalised but still illegal, the debate is murkier but ongoing. In Britain, however, there is little informed discussion. Last

week the High Court ruled that Annice Lindsell, a 46-year-old woman who is gravely ill with the debilitating but not usually painful motor neurone disease, could receive an injection from her doctor to make her unconscious in order to relieve her mental suffering. But do most of us really know what this means? A few days later the International Forum for Transplant Ethics headed by the former president of the Royal College came out in favour of giving lethal injections to patients who are in permanent vegetative states and then harvesting their organs. But do we have any idea what we are really talking about here?

Dr Philip Nitschke does and the story of his eight months as a practising euthanasia doctor has more than a few surprises. Part of this is because the man they call Dr Death is himself a surprise. Today he is on his way to Oregon for the vote and last week he was in London to address a Voluntary Euthanasia Society symposium. I met him and his killing machine at his London hotel room.

"Oh I've had so many problems with that bloody machine," he says as we walk towards the room. These turn out to be technical in nature and he says it's a good thing it doesn't have to be used again. In the room the laptop computer attached to a contraption of vials and a needle is all set up. The barbiturates are even loaded, as is the "Deliverance" software that enabled his terminally ill patients to tap their way through a series of steps, the last of which triggered a lethal injection. The machine still has its Qantas luggage tags attached. It is not considered hand luggage.

He invented the machine because patients said they wanted to be in control of their own deaths. By law, he only had to be in the room when they hit the button. He no longer uses it though he does admit to helping some people who would have qualified under the old law to try and get the barbiturates they want so desperately. "I find myself in the position all the time of breaking the law. I don't like it at all. One has to be constantly careful. One has to sneak around. One feels like a criminal. But if they are going to push us back into that shadowy illegal world, you will get behaviour that is more in keeping with the jungle than when we had a piece of legislation and a bit of sunlight on the issue."

Dr Nitschke was contacted by some 50 people who wanted to die and, as such, managed to build the first profile of its kind. "They were almost all terminally ill from cancer and were in the late stages after everything else had been tried. They were older, mid-sixties, and usually from the lower economic spectrum. You know, people who have money have never had trouble getting access to euthanasia. The people who contacted me were not part of the club, they did not have brothers and sisters who were doctors. One of the good things about the Territory law was that it opened things up to everyone. It was not just a matter of who you knew. It became something that people saw as one of their rights."

The law caused uproar when it came into effect on 1 July 1996. Media from all over the world made their way to the remote Northern Territory to

report on a situation where local doctors were loath to give the signatures that were required under the law. The first two people to die did so in the middle of a media scrum. Whatever it was, this was not death with dignity.

"At first the law was a circus but then the situation changed. The media interest died off. It wasn't seen as a sideshow anymore. They were discreet and private affairs." When the federal government overturned the law by a two-vote margin earlier this year, Dr Nitschke had patients who were ready to die. One was Esther Wild and her story, he believes, shows the hypocrisy of the law as it now stands around the world.

"Because neither he nor his machine could give her a lethal injection, Dr Nitschke could only treat Esther Wild for her pain. This is what is called the 'double effect' when treatment for pain ends up hastening death. It is not illegal as long as the doctor only intends to treat the pain. This is common practice around Britain and was the crux of Annie Lindsell's case. In effect, Annie Lindsell won a widening of how the current law is interpreted and for her mental suffering to be seen as pain and treated as such."

Dr Nitschke sees this as "slow euthanasia". The idea is that the patient asks for the in-

fusion to begin and they then slip into a coma and eventually die. In practice, of course, there can be problems. "In Esther Wild's case we started the infusion but three times in four days she woke up. One time she woke up and asked 'Am I dead? Is this death?' and I had to run in and get the infusion running again." Opponents of euthanasia praised the case as good medical practice, which Dr Nitschke finds bizarre. "To call that obscenely good medical practice just shows how far off the rails we are."

A key lesson here is that there is a demand for euthanasia and demands tend to get met, one way or the other. There is a lot of interest now in developing a "suicide pill" that would be a human version of the one used by veterinarians for animals. "This is not the way I want to see it go but in the same way as I see it as an inevitable consequence of having so much difficulty getting legislation passed," he says. "We battle, battle, battle and can't get the law through. It's not surprising that people are putting effort into this kind of thing."

The idea of a suicide pill, like euthanasia, is not the kind of thing we want to think about. But think we must for this is one of the great questions of our time and how we answer affects all our lives - and deaths.

One woman shows southerners they have new friends in the north

The south's ringing endorsement of its first northern president reflects the changing state of Irish nationalism and some new hope for the peace process, says David McKittrick.

Although the president of the Irish Republic is supposed to have few powers beyond the strictly ceremonial, the election of Mary McAleese contains great significance for north-south and Anglo-Irish relations. It comes as representatives of the British and Irish governments and most of Northern Ireland's political parties are ensconced in Stormont working on a new dispensation which could be as far-reaching as the 1920s arrangement which created Northern Ireland.

The south's choice of Professor McAleese, by the biggest winning margin in the Republic's history, says much about what it wants to see emerging from the Stormont talks. The extraordinary campaign gave telling insights into southern opinion, and in particular the state of Irish nationalism.

She is the first British citizen to be elected president of the Republic. Her predecessor, Mary Robinson, has gone down

in history as the first woman to hold the post. Professor McAleese will go down as the first northerner. This is in itself hugely significant, since being from the north has traditionally been a drawback in southern politics. Even before the troubles many in the south found many northerners rather too blunt, too hard, too harsh for comfort. Decades of violence and political deadlock sharpened that original distaste into real aversion.

Yet the belief is now widespread in the south that the troubles are almost certainly over, and this rapidly growing feeling seems to have brought with it a new fellow-feeling for northern nationalists. The presidential campaign provided firm evidence of this.

The dominant issue in the campaign was that of the nature of Mary McAleese's nationalism, which assumed centrality when leaked documents were produced which were used to allege that she was secretly sympathetic to Sinn Féin. Up to that point the campaign, with its five well-mannered candidates, had been gracious and genteel; the leaks issue ignited it.

Someone had gone through sensitive Irish foreign ministry documents, copied anything which looked damaging to Professor McAleese, and posted



President Mary McAleese

them to newspapers. When questioned about them, she explained that she had been part of a behind-the-scenes peace initiative under the auspices of the Redemptorist Order. Redemptorist priest Father Alex Reid, who helped bring about the first IRA cessation of violence, was trying to bring about a second ceasefire and she was helping him.

Around this time she also received what looked like the endorsement from hell, when Gerry Adams announced that if he had a vote he would cast it for her. John Bruton, leader of the largest opposition party, Fionn Gael, seized on this and attacked the Adams endorsement. At that point Professor McAleese was slightly ahead in the polls. Whoever leaked the documents clearly hoped to wreck her campaign, while her

political opponents hoped to tap into what they assumed was a latent vein of anti-northern sentiment. The opinion polls which followed, however, told an astonishing story: both the leaks and the criticisms had backfired and been counterproductive.

She sailed even further ahead in the polls, while the approval rating for John Bruton dropped like a stone from 60 to 43 per cent. After that Professor McAleese never looked back, as waves of sympathy brought more and more support from those who believed she was victim of dirty tricks.

The psychiatrist Professor Anthony Clare, for example, wrote of "a smear of McCarthyite proportions hatched, fanned and daubed all over the McAleese campaign - the classic smear of guilt by association, used with a gusto reminiscent of J Edgar Hoover at his most malign".

The episode cast light on the overall peace process. There is a strain of opinion in the south, particularly well-represented in the media, which has deep concerns and reservations about the course of the process which has led to the IRA's present ceasefire and Sinn Féin's subsequent entry into talks.

This worry, presented in its most aggressive form, has been

used to argue that those attempting to bring Sinn Féin into mainstream politics are naive and foolish, or, alternatively, crypto-republicans. They believe Sinn Féin will not be tamed by the political system but will instead pollute it.

The McAleese leaks provided the most acute test of support for this proposition. The result appears to have been an emphatic endorsement of the McAleese approach and the peace process as a whole, as the allegation that she was a "smacking rearguard" of republicanism was briskly rejected.

The election may also have shown that southern voters, in this context at least, did not show themselves overly concerned with the effect of the result on those other important northerners, the Unionists. This point is, however, highly arguable, since Unionists sent very mixed messages during the campaign.

Some contradicted Professor McAleese's assertion that she had the private goodwill and support of many Unionists, though later a number of Protestant clergy spoke publicly of her as both a peacemaker and a committed ecumenist. The clincher, for those southerners worried about Unionist opinion, probably came when John Taylor, deputy leader of

the Ulster Unionist party, said that while she was "an out-and-out nationalist" she was by no means a republican sympathiser and "a most able person, quite easy to work with".

Nonetheless, the McAleese success will give many Protestants cause to reflect on the steady rise in northern nationalist power and what they view as its unfortunate corollary, the steady decline in Unionist influence.

The new Irish president is a product of Belfast ghetto Catholicism: her family fled the city after their house was shot up by loyalists in the early 1970s. After that unpromising start she has emerged from the trauma of the troubles a remarkably self-confident and assertive person; and there are plenty more where she came from.

Quite a few of them are present inside the Stormont talks, while many more today play a leading part in Northern Ireland's public life. Unionists will be all too aware that these are people who regard themselves as being on the way up. They clearly will not endorse any settlement emerging from Stormont which does not give full recognition to their Irishness, as the south's electorate has just endorsed the Irishness of the first northern president, Mary McAleese.

REMBRANDT WHITENING TOOTHPASTE FOR A 5-STAR SMILE



Rembrandt has won the maximum 5-star rating in a test for the best whitening toothpaste carried out by *Now* magazine, the smarter woman's weekly.

Now Magazine has this to say about Rembrandt, which came out top of five brands tested -

Used over six weeks it did make teeth whiter - without feeling abrasive - which isn't bad considering it had to cope with coffee, tea, red wine and smoking. Guaranteed to bring a sparkle to your smile.

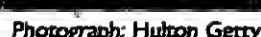
- *Now* magazine 1997

Rembrandt, the low abrasion whitening toothpaste. A unique formula of enzymes and anti-plaque agents gently break down stains.

The results are simply dazzling.

Available from quality chemists everywhere.

REMBRANDT
WHITENING TOOTHPASTE



benefit of a claim which it had commenced in an action before the Official Referee and was accordingly not entitled to legal aid. There was no obligation outside the express contractual terms which imposed an "fiduciary" obligation upon the applicant, and it did not therefore come within s 2(10) of the Legal Aid Act 1988.

David Pennick QC, Michael Fordham (Legal Aid Board) for the respondent; Colin Reese QC (Morrison Shroves) for the companies; Philip Havers QC, Robert Jay (Winward Fearon) for the

17/SHARES

THE INDEPENDENT
MONDAY
3 NOVEMBER 1997

Blue chips' results set to provide a distraction from world market thrills

WEEK AHEAD



DEREK PAIN
STOCK
MARKET
REPORTER
OF THE YEAR

After last week's roller-coaster, as debate still rages whether it was merely a correction or the start of a bear run, the stock market can, if it wishes, concentrate on a string of company results this week.

The past few weeks have provided few profit figures. So the market has had little in the way of a distraction from the gyrations around the world. A heavy reporting schedule would, of course, not have reduced last week's succession of thrills and spills but at least it would have given dealers something else to think about and, just perhaps, stopped some abhorring the wider rumours which swept the market and created such a panic.

The most popular guess is that Fosite will experience an inductive time until the year end, then the scenario is strong progress with the index ending

1998 at 5,800 points or even 6,000.

Fosite, driven largely by financials, has, despite its recent fall from grace, enjoyed a spectacular year. It started at 4,118.5 with estimates it would reach 4,600 regarded as highly optimistic. So last week's close, 4,842.3, should brighten the lives of many investors. It is true supporting shares have not fared nearly as well. Even so, most have made headway.

This week's crop of figures includes some of the blue chips which would inevitably feature in any quality list for times of stress and strain.

They may on occasions look exceedingly dull against the (often short-lived) high flyers but they deserve a place in any portfolio.

A doze Fosite constituents have, so far, indicated their intention of producing

profits; they range from British Petroleum to Marks & Spencer.

Associated British Foods, Garfield Weston's cash-rich and sprawling food empire is expected to get the week off to a low-key start today with year's profits of £5m to £40m; sterling's strength and the BSE crisis have taken their toll. Still, after selling its Irish super-markets, ABF is sitting on more than £1.5bn and it is Mr Weston's spending plans which, says Alan Erskine at NatWest Securities, is the "biggest single issue for the stock".

Tomorrow is the turn of BP M&S and Thames Water. BP offers third-quarter figures. John Toalster at Societe Generale Strauss Turnbull looks for net income, on a replacement-cost basis, of £574m compared with £744m in the second quarter. In the third

quarter last year BP produced £650m.

Interim figures from M&S are expected to be up some 8 per cent at £465m with currency movements retarding overseas earnings. Full-year's profits may edge £1.2bn.

Thames Water keeps the water profits season flowing and should manage an interim increase of 19 per cent to £210m. It should also show the scars of the windfall tax.

On Wednesday Whitbread has the distinction of kicking off the brewery results season. Interim profits should not be far short of £200m against £178m.

Whitbread has invested more heavily in restaurants than its rivals which, in the main, seem more keen on trendy theme bars. But there is a feeling it will have to increase its retail estate beyond Café Rouge, Pizzaland and Beefeater to keep up its momentum. Another retail concept could be a matter of urgency. Although it ranks as the nation's fourth-largest brewer, beer represents a relatively minor part of its profits, around 13 per cent.

British Airways flies in on Wednesday. Its interim results will be distorted by industrial

unrest and sterling. BA has indicated that July's cabin crew strike cost £125m. A 40 per cent dive to £270m is a possible result.

ScottishPower, taking in Southern Water, also reports on Wednesday and should manage interim profits of around £250m compared with £188.3m. Another giant of the high street, Boots, checks in on Thursday. It should have enjoyed another good run but the group is still finding do-it-yourself a struggle. Its Do-it-All chain probably lost money, say £1.5m, in the six months to end September. Profits of around £255m against £239.1m are likely.

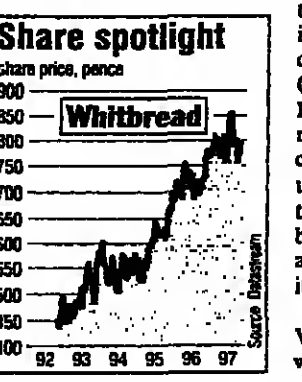
Royal & Sun Alliance and Mercury Asset Management are others with a reporting task on Thursday. The insurance group's first nine-month figures since the Royal/Sun

merger could be around £730m with a share buy-back possibly on the agenda. MAMs interim is seen as emerging at £88m against £81.8m.

Shell is due to report on Thursday. Third-quarter net income should roll out £1.17bn against £1.11bn. And on Friday it is the turn of another Anglo-Dutch giant, Unilever. It, too, has third-quarter results to announce, around £825m, a modest advance, is expected.

Most of the blue-chip groups should underline their safe-haven appeal by increasing their dividends. BP could be an exception: Shell does not reward shareholders at the third-quarter stage.

Some of the smaller fry in this week's spotlight are unlikely to lift dividends. But Wyndham Press, on Friday, should manage an 11 per cent lift to 2.1p.



Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items but including extraordinary costs. Price/earnings ratios are shown for the last twelve months' declared gross dividend. Source: Bloomberg

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(P/E ratio: London EC2A 4P)

(P/E ratio: call cost 50p per minute)

Interest Rates

UK	Germany	US
Base	Discount	Prime
3.00%	2.50%	5.00%
Overseas	Canada	Japan
Discount	Prime	Discount
6.25%	5.25%	0.50%
Netherlands	Denmark	Switzerland
3.50%	3.50%	1.00%
Sweden	Finland	France
4.00%	4.00%	2.75%

Oil Exploration & Production

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
BP	25.00	0.00	100
Shell	24.00	0.00	95
Esso	23.00	0.00	90
Amoco	22.00	0.00	85
Exxon	21.00	0.00	80

Other Financial

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Barclays	10.00	0.00	100
HSBC	9.00	0.00	95
Midland	8.00	0.00	90
First National	7.00	0.00	85
Bank of Scotland	6.00	0.00	80

Pharmaceuticals

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Astra	15.00	0.00	100
Glaxo	14.00	0.00	95
Wellcome	13.00	0.00	90
Roche	12.00	0.00	85
Novartis	11.00	0.00	80

Life Assurance

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Prudential	10.00	0.00	100
Aviva	9.00	0.00	95
Legal & General	8.00	0.00	90
Standard Life	7.00	0.00	85
Scottish Widows	6.00	0.00	80

Property

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Land Securities	10.00	0.00	100
Imperial	9.00	0.00	95
British Land	8.00	0.00	90
Centrica	7.00	0.00	85
Wentworth	6.00	0.00	80

Media

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
British Sky	10.00	0.00	100
ITV	9.00	0.00	95
Channel 4	8.00	0.00	90
Channel 5	7.00	0.00	85
ITN	6.00	0.00	80

Government Securities

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
UK Govt	10.00	0.00	100
US Govt	9.00	0.00	95
Japan Govt	8.00	0.00	90
France Govt	7.00	0.00	85
Germany Govt	6.00	0.00	80

Support Services

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Unilever	10.00	0.00	100
Shell	9.00	0.00	95
BP	8.00	0.00	90
Esso	7.00	0.00	85
Amoco	6.00	0.00	80

Water

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Thames Water	10.00	0.00	100
Southern Water	9.00	0.00	95
Anglian Water	8.00	0.00	90
Scottish Water	7.00	0.00	85
Welsh Water	6.00	0.00	80

Telecommunications

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
British Telecom	10.00	0.00	100
Telecom Italia	9.00	0.00	95
Telefonos de Mexico	8.00	0.00	90
Telecom France	7.00	0.00	85
Telecom Germany	6.00	0.00	80

Textiles & Apparel

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Next	10.00	0.00	100
Primark	9.00	0.00	95
Debenhams	8.00	0.00	90
Primark	7.00	0.00	85
Primark	6.00	0.00	80

Tobacco

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
B&W	10.00	0.00	100
W.D. & H.O. Wills	9.00	0.00	95
Imperial Tobacco	8.00	0.00	90
British American	7.00	0.00	85
W.D. & H.O. Wills	6.00	0.00	80

Transport

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
British Airways	10.00	0.00	100
Virgin Atlantic	9.00	0.00	95
easyJet	8.00	0.00	90
Ryanair	7.00	0.00	85
Jet2	6.00	0.00	80

Energy

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
British Gas	10.00	0.00	100
British Petroleum	9.00	0.00	95
Shell	8.00	0.00	90
Esso	7.00	0.00	85
Amoco	6.00	0.00	80

Food

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Unilever	10.00	0.00	100
Shell	9.00	0.00	95
BP	8.00	0.00	90
Esso	7.00	0.00	85
Amoco	6.00	0.00	80

Chemicals

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Astra	10.00	0.00	100
Glaxo	9.00	0.00	95
Wellcome	8.00	0.00	90
Roche	7.00	0.00	85
Novartis	6.00	0.00	80

Engineering

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Rolls Royce	10.00	0.00	100
BAE Systems	9.00	0.00	95
QinetiQ	8.00	0.00	90
BAE Systems	7.00	0.00	85
QinetiQ	6.00	0.00	80

Disruptors

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
British Airways	10.00	0.00	100
Virgin Atlantic	9.00	0.00	95
easyJet	8.00	0.00	90
Ryanair	7.00	0.00	85
Jet2	6.00	0.00	80

Source: Bloomberg

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Shake-up at C&W hits executives

Output is expected to reach 40,000 ounces a year shortly, rising to 70,000 ounces a year by the end of 1998 if additional capacity is brought on stream. As output rises there will be problems separating gold from the copper content of the ore, which increases as the mine goes deeper, but these are two or three years away.

If all goes well, future development could be farmed out to joint ventures with established giants like BHP and Minnoro. The shares have ranged from 12p to 33.5p since they were listed. Last week they closed at 24.25p.

It might be that the
the very brave
would see a
financial crisis
overwhelm
East Asia.

As markets begin another period of uncertainty, the region argues that the turn in these countries

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According to World Bank figures, between 1995 and 1999, the average increase in the value of the index was 10.7 per cent.

Exports rose 18.4 per cent in 1990, while imports rose 10.5 per cent. The trade surplus was \$1.1 billion, up from \$1.0 billion in 1989.

falling currency
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Bank of America
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for the year
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However, the
Company is

هكذا من الاصل



GAVYN DAVIES
ON THE
COLLAPSE IN
THE FAR EAST

Why the world is not threatened by deflation

The phenomenal recent volatility in stock markets around the world has raised the spectre of global deflation in the minds of many investors. The decline of about 10 per cent in world stock prices which was seen before the rebound last Tuesday was the first such setback in equities in the past 25 years which had not been preceded by a rise of at least 50 basis points in global bond yields.

In other words, market paranoia in this occasion was not triggered by the usual concerns that inflation would rise and that this would be followed by higher nominal interest rates, leading to a decline in both bond and equity prices. Instead, the panic in the past few weeks has been triggered by precisely the opposite factors - downward pressure on goods prices, leading to declines in profit margins, and potentially then to global deflation.

As deflation sets in, real interest rates may rise, because central banks are unable to reduce nominal interest rates in line with price declines, so monetary conditions are unintentionally tightened. This tightening then leads in further declines in demand - ie to a self-reinforcing slump. Bond prices rise sharply as equity prices collapse. To those investors who were raised in the inflationary 1970s and 1980s, and who may therefore think that this story sounds inherently implausible, there is no need to look back to the 1930s to find a real-life example of the havoc that deflationary forces can wreak - just look at Japan today. Last week, it was possible to find plenty of investors who believed that the chilling Japanese example was likely to spread to the rest of the world.

Support for this view is evident in the recent behaviour of world producer prices, which measure the prices of manufactured

goods as they leave the factory gates. At the start of 1997, the six-month annualised inflation rate for producer prices in the major economies was around 2 per cent. Now, following the collapse in Asian activity, this inflation rate has declined to -1 per cent. In other words, deflation is already visible in the goods sectors of the OECD economies.

However, much of this reflects earlier developments in commodity prices, which fell sharply in the first half of this year, primarily triggered by a major weakening in energy prices. Commodity prices have rebounded strongly in the past three months, and importantly there are no signs of a significant fall in overall commodity demand at present, particularly for energy products.

Admittedly, the Asian meltdown shows every sign of getting much worse before it starts to improve, and this will sharply curtail global aggregate demand. There are also some fears that a decline in global equity prices could damage confidence and thus depress consumer spending in the US and elsewhere. Taken together, these factors could certainly depress global inflation, and if they prove large enough they could even lead to outright deflation.

However, it is more likely that the impact of these negative shocks will be more than offset by the positive impact of other shocks - for example, rising confidence and domestic demand in Latin America, Eastern Europe and the United States; a gradual recovery in confidence in continental Europe; and the general impact of very expansionary monetary conditions in most corners of the globe. In other words, no systemic fall is likely in aggregate consumer prices.

In judging the relative strength of

expansionary and contractionary forces at present, four key points should be made. First, the monetary policy environment is scarcely conducive to global deflation. Growth in nominal GDP in the OECD area is running at around 4 to 4.5 per cent, which is at least 2 per cent higher than would be consistent with global deflation. On Goldman Sachs' indices of global monetary conditions, the major central banks are delivering exceptionally easy conditions at present; the easiest they have been for at least 20 years. Broad money growth is much stronger than the growth in real GDP, suggesting that liquidity is ample. Furthermore, should the growth in nominal GDP falter, there is scope, if necessary, for monetary policy to be eased further in all countries except Japan.

Second, the wealth effects from any likely stock market "crash" from current levels should not prove very significant. At the low point last week, world share prices were still up by about 9 per cent this calendar year, after a 14 per cent rise in 1996. The positive wealth effects from these increases in equity prices have not

yet been fully reflected in consumer spending around the world. By the same token, any decline in equity prices from current levels would not depress spending immediately. In fact, after the inevitable near-term confidence effects had been absorbed, consumer spending might continue to rise as a lagged response to earlier increases in equity prices. This, indeed, was one of the lessons of the 1987 crash.

Third, Goldman Sachs has recently carried out some simulations to estimate the impact on the world economy of a much bigger economic shock from Asia than is currently forecast. Specifically, Goldman assumed a slump big enough to trigger an improvement in the current account of 4 per cent of GDP in the Asian countries, 2 per cent of GDP in the rest of Asia and 1 per cent of GDP in Japan. An adjustment of this size would cut 0.4 per cent off the level of US GDP, 0.3 per cent off European GDP and 1.6 per cent off Japanese GDP next year. The overall impact on OECD GDP is about 0.5 per cent - significant but not yet catastrophic. The impact on inflation is also important, but not path-breaking. Assuming a shock of the

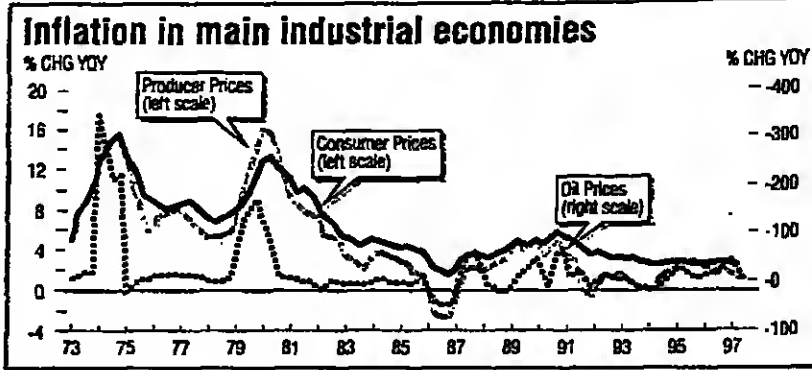
above magnitude, the world output gap would widen by 1 per cent, curbing world inflation next year by about 0.4 to 0.5 per cent. Nasty for some manufacturing companies, but not the end of the world.

Fourth, this shock occurs at a time when upward revisions to world economic activity in other geographical areas are taking place. The US is now expected to grow by 4 per cent this year, compared with an expectation of 3 per cent a few months ago. There have been modest upward revisions in European growth forecasts. Latin America is expected to grow by 5 per cent this year and next. Eastern Europe by 4 per cent in both years. Even if OECD growth were curbed by 1 per cent next year - an extreme assumption - the world economy would still be a long way from recession.

Importantly, this also seems to be the belief that the global central banks are operating on. While they would certainly be prepared to provide additional liquidity in the near-term in the event of a market meltdown, any easing will prove temporary. On occasions last week, bond markets have flirted with the view that the Fed might shortly be willing to ease policy, and keep rates lower, for several quarters. This is not at all likely.

In summary, Asia is a big place, accounting for about a third of world GDP, and it is suffering a foreign exchange and equity collapse similar to that in Europe in 1992/93. Anyone who thinks that these market shocks will not have severe continent-wide economic effects is clearly out to dinner, as well as to lunch.

But while Asia might be big, the world is a lot bigger - and it is important to remember that the rest of it is doing rather well.



How the financial crisis could strengthen the Asian economies

It might be imagined that only the very brave or the very stupid would see a silver lining in the financial crisis which is overwhelming the countries of East Asia.

As markets in the Far East begin another week of uncertainty, some economists in the region argue that the negative sentiment has been overdone and that the turmoil may even make these countries stronger.

Any nation with the combination of an export-driven economy and a currency whose convertible value has plunged almost in half can hardly fail to become super-competitive. As this applies to Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, the four countries hit hardest by the financial turmoil, it must be good news.

They are part of an export boom which outstripped the rest of the world some three times or more and led to the kind of double economic digit growth not seen elsewhere in the first half of the decade nor, for that matter, at any other time in history.

According to World Bank figures, between 1990 and 1995 Indonesia's export volume grew on average by over 21 per cent per year, while the value of those exports grew by just 11.5 per cent.

In Malaysia, the volume growth was 17.8 per cent and the value growth just 8.6 per cent. The Philippines did less well, expanding export volumes by an average 10.2 per cent, which in value terms exports rose 21.6 per cent in volume and 18.6 per cent in value, a far better performance than any of its neighbours.

One reason for Thailand's better-than-average record was that its currency maintained a consistently modest exchange rate with major customer nations.

The other countries saw their currencies rise and exports fall after 1995. Now all four countries share the same advantage, only more so. They can even afford price rises in their own currencies which will still translate into price falls for overseas customers.

The negative side of the picture is that falling currencies produce high interest rates and raise the cost of imports, both of which pressures lead to higher inflation. Inflationary fears are behind the scramble by economists to produce downward revisions of GDP growth estimates. The Bank of America, for example, is marking down its 1998 collective growth estimate for the Asian nations of south-east Asia from 7.5 per cent to 5.9 per cent.

However, this may prove to be a short-term phenomenon while in the medium to

longer term these economies are going to benefit greatly from an end to the grossly overblown asset values, mainly in the property market, which were the product of relatively cheap credit and cash searching for a home.

The distortion of asset values led to distortions in the economy, producing unnecessarily high costs and, as we have seen, ruinous damage to finance houses who lent money recklessly.

The crash is shaking the dubious finance houses out of the system - just this weekend it was announced that the Indonesian government was closing down 16 insolvent banks.

A wave of bank closures has already swept through Thailand, while in the Philippines, which came under IMF strictures before these two countries, banks are in good shape, having the lowest ratio of liabilities relative to equity of any country in the region.

The IMF is now pouring money into both Thailand and Indonesia, and although it is far from a perfect arbiter of economic probity, many of the measures it is forcing on these countries are precisely those which internal critics have been urging without response for some time.

In Malaysia, which is under no IMF strictures, the government itself has realised that many of its grandiose projects will have to go and that a bout of austerity may be no bad thing.

In other words, the financial crisis could bring these economies back down to earth. The fantastic valuations of Far East stock markets will fade, asset values will start resembling reality and, despite the setbacks, these economies, even in the short term, are likely to continue growing at a faster rate than economies elsewhere in the world.

Paul Schulte, the chief strategist at ING Barings Securities in Hong Kong believes that the markets are finally getting back to "decent valuations" and sees the share slump as a rational reaction to the exaggerated expectations which built up among investors.

"The herd is behaving rationally for a change," he said.

However, it may take a while to persuade the international fund managers that they should return to Far East markets, particularly as the near-term outlook is for more turbulence. "People just want to take their bat and ball and go home," Mr Schulte said.

They may be right to stay away. The shocks delivered to the financial system have been sudden and sharp but the policymakers in East Asia are still reluctant to take many of the hard decisions which are needed to reform their financial markets.

The deflation of asset values will be hard to swallow and the dangers of inflation are ever present. However, to write off the world's fastest growing economies as a spent force seems a tad premature.

Angels double their investments in start-ups

Business angels - individuals who help fund start-up and growing companies - commit nearly twice as much money to each investment as they did three years ago, according to research published today to mark the 10th anniversary of the Local Investment Networking Company (Linc).

The report, by Zsolt Lengyel of the London School of Economics and James Gulliford of

Bristol Business School, finds the average transaction is worth £57,000, compared with £30,000 in 1994, while nearly a third of deals involve investments of more than £100,000.

The findings follow the publication of further research last week from the British Venture Capital Association suggesting that the number of business angels registered with networks and seeking investment oppor-

tunities has doubled since December 1993 to more than 5,600. The number of investment opportunities has also risen substantially, by over 70 per cent to more than 2,200, while the number of networks seeking to match would-be investors with opportunities has also more than doubled, from 17 to 43.

The survey in "Sources of Business Angel Capital" claims that in the past four years angels

have invested more than £65m in more than 700 registered companies. In the past year, 373 angels have put more than £19m into 192 UK companies.

Susan Krantz, general manager of Linc, said the research was "highly encouraging to those of us who believe that business angels offer a very attractive option for growing companies and start-ups seeking finance and other support".

She added that the research demonstrated that the concept was gaining strength and meeting a real need for investors and investees. More than 70 per cent of those surveyed by Linc thought that the deals concluded were favourable to both sides. Nearly half of the investors questioned planned to make further informal investments in the future.

- Roger Trapp

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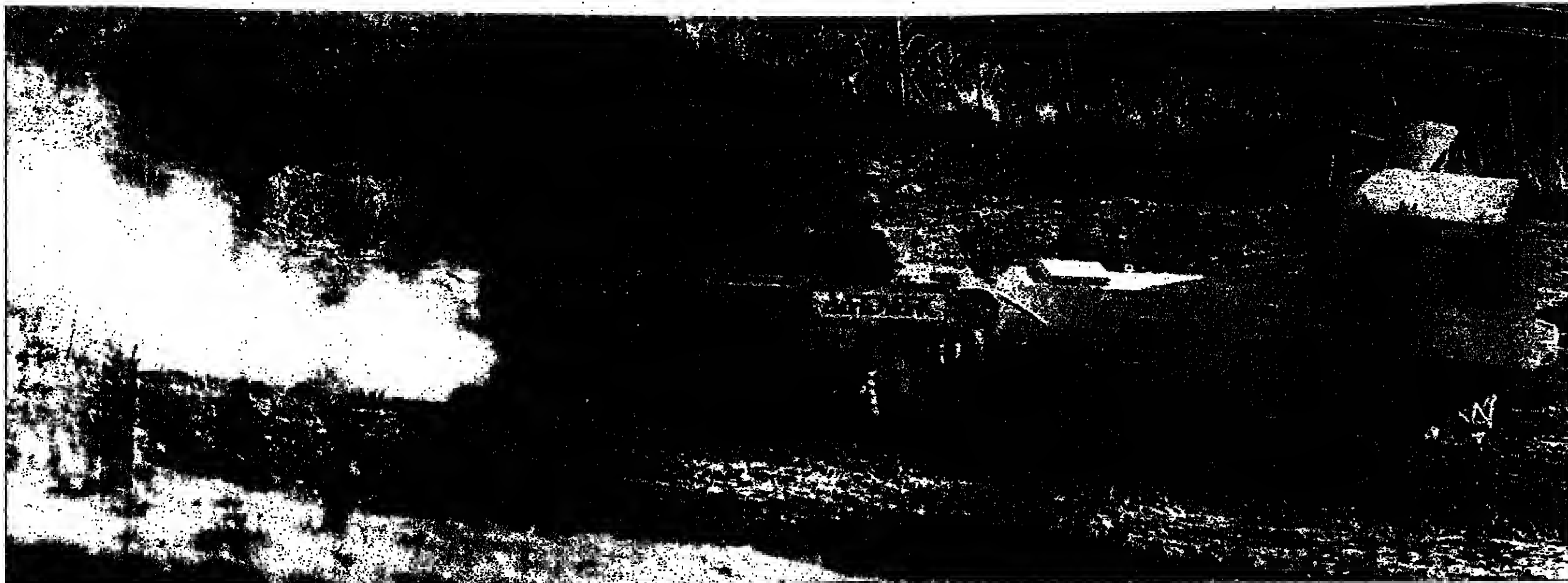
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Aardvark digs in to rid the world of landmines



Clearing up: The Aardvark being tested at Insh in Aberdeenshire from where more than 100 have been sold to help destroy landmines in 32 countries

Photographs: Doug Moir

A British firm is at the forefront of clearing the estimated 119 million landmines still hidden underground. Steve Boggan rode in the 'Aardvark' - which works by simply driving over them.

There were enough plastic explosives underneath us to blow up 10 cars or, as one of the munitions experts put it, to throw a Mini Metro 30ft into the air.

"Five pounds will usually destroy a car," said David Clark, doing mental arithmetic in the claustrophobic armour-plated

cabin of the Aardvark. "There are five kilos underneath us. But you shouldn't feel a thing."

The explosives weren't directly underneath the cabin. They were about 10ft away at the front of a machine that is making huge strides in the hazardous - indeed terrifying - business of mine clearance.

The charge was in front of the Aardvark's blast shield and below the rotating chains that cut into the earth, churning it up and detonating the hidden explosives.

Suddenly, there was a huge blast that rocked the 13-ton vehicle and plunged us into darkness as soil and stones rained

down on the cab. But Mr Clark, 32, a former Royal Engineer, was right. We didn't feel a thing.

The Aardvark is the brainchild of David Sadler, a 58-year-old accountant who used to make a living selling explosives to the oil industry. In 1984, however, he realised that there was a desperate need for new innovations to help deal with the 119 million landmines still concealed after conflicts dating back to the Second World War.

The result was the Aardvark, a vehicle that detonates mines by thrashing them with its chains. Many of its features date back to the last war, but its armour plating and bullet-proof windows make it the most advanced mine-clearing vehicle

that has ever been invented.

Since its development, more than 100 Aardvarks have been sold in 32 countries. Costing only £250,000 each, they have been bought by governments, armies and aid agencies, but since the death of Diana, the telephone in the company's remote office at Insh, 25 miles north of Aberdeen, hasn't stopped ringing.

"We have been inundated with calls from people who want to begin clearing up the mess left behind after wars all over the world," said Mr Sadler. "Diana's death certainly concentrated people's minds. Now the public at large are much better informed about landmines and they want their governments to do something about them."

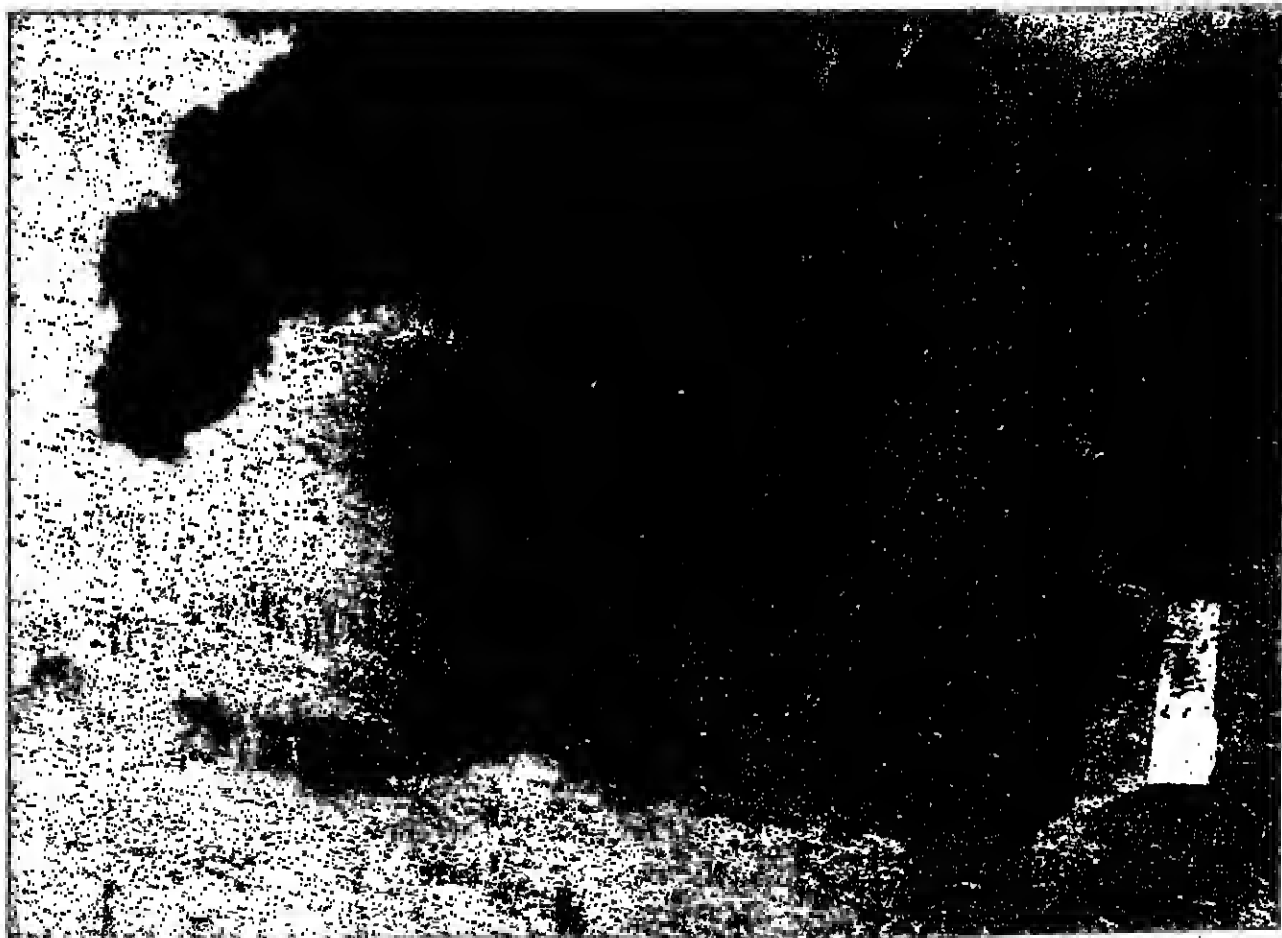
According to the Red Cross, 2,000 people are maimed or killed by landmines every month - or once every 20 minutes. More than 70 countries are now affected, the worst being Iran (16 million mines), Angola (15 million), Iraq (10 million), Afghanistan (10 million), Cambodia (10 million), Bosnia-Herzegovina (up to 6 million) and even Egypt, which is thought to have up to 23 million, many left over from the El Alamein campaign during the Second World War.

Using traditional methods, it would be virtually impossible to clear the world's mines. Utilising either mine detectors - which do not work with plastic mines - or simply prodding up the land, and they simply sowed seeds in our wake."

The Aardvark can clear a 10ft-wide path two-thirds of a mile long each hour. And, whereas the UN estimates that one person is killed for every 5,000 mines cleared, none of its operatives has ever been injured.

"It's wonderful to be able to make something like this that armies buy but which actually saves lives," said Mr Sadler. "In areas that have been mined, life grinds to a halt. No one will farm their fields, entire areas lie empty. But when we clear them, life gets back to normal. It's a wonderful sight."

"In Afghanistan, the farmers who hadn't been on their land for years, followed behind the Aardvark where it had churned up the land, and they simply sowed seeds in our wake."

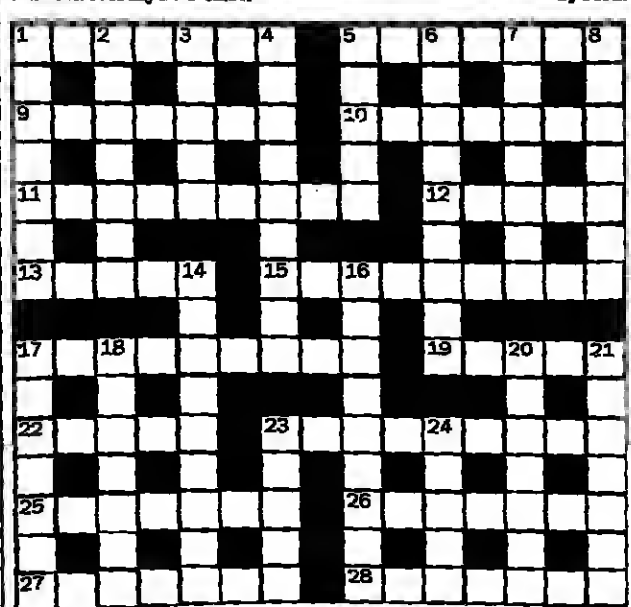


Under cover: The Aardvark hidden behind soil and stones as its rotating chains unearth and explode another mine

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3446, Monday 3 November

By Paula



- 26 Improve by the end of class (7)
27 Foreign money swindled out of grande dame (7)
28 Are scattering earth on grave (7)

DOWN

- 1 Part with a pupil who's a handful (7)
2 Nonsense to include new information on German scientist (7)
3 Perform in 'The Go-Between', actually (5)
4 Take him a version of complete comic opera (3,6)
5 Setting out what's available (5)
6 Place that's currently out on a limb? (9)
7 Say nothing and fix one close to (7)
8 Dog kennel's incomplete without one (7)
14 Breakaway church engaged in meeting (9)
16 Outclass middle-men involved with hopeless venture (4,5)
17 Cliff managed without junk (7)
18 Plenty make an effort to catch European draw (7)
20 Reach arrangement about promotion - it's a farce (7)
21 Block voting system happening at last (7)
23 Do without extra (5)
24 Traditionally made up about a gallon brew (5)

- ACROSS
1 Positive about fine object being too much (7)
5 He carved out a career as an early composer (7)
9 Number point to brilliant fish in the lake (7)
10 Queuing to put a hundred in bank (7)
11 Straight gain by force that's reactionary (5,4)
12 Told to throw away the middle part (5)
13 Green measures (5)
15 Suddenly, everyone is united around Conservative (3,2,4)
17 Fragrant kind of oil I used contains vitamin (9)
19 He makes the running over producing survey (5)
22 Overheard names of potential development areas (5)
23 Bad workers are given it (4,5)
25 States academy's degree chap received (7)

Contrary to a widely held belief, some of our passengers don't pay a

Penny.

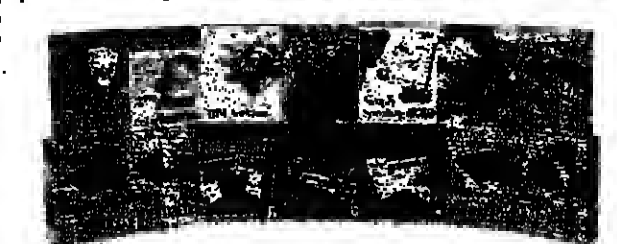
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